BEYOND *The* MENACE

Harriett Graham Lewis

Class PZ3
Book .L58603
Copyright No. Be
Copy 2
COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

BEYOND THE MENACE

"Arrel! my Arrel! tell me that the cruel story I overheard to-night is untrue! Oh, tell me this, I implore!"

BEYOND *THE* MENACE

By

HARRIETT GRAHAM LEWIS

1923

THE STRATFORD COMPANY, PUBLISHERS

Boston, Massachusetts

Copy 2

PZ3
.L586
Be
cop

MAY 26 1923 ©CIA705584

Preface

Destiny has two currents,
And men are free to choose
The current of high ideals,
Or the opposite — as they please.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The current of high ideals
Flows into quiet seas,
To islands where clear sweet streams
And odors from pure ozone are found,
And where integrity and trust abound.
There, peace sings pæns with the breeze,
And the tender blossoms
Of the starry-eyed heartsease
Smile up to summer skies
All the year around.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The current of low ideals
Glides swiftly through poppy fields;
To deep, dank woods and tangled wilds;
Where cypress trees hang over stagnant pools —
Pools with slippery brinks —
There, vultures, foul as those
Which hover over Parsee's towers,
Are wont to flock and drink.
There, virtue is lost,
And sense of honor dies.

H. G. L.

TO MY LOVED ONES WHO LIVE IN OTHER SPHERES AND TO MY FRIEND LENA MAY CRUM, A NOBLE EARTH-BOUND SPIRIT, THIS WORK IS TENDERLY INSCRIBED.

THE AUTHOR

Contents

Chapter		Page
I		1
II		12
III		24
IV		37
V		47
VI		57
VII		62
VIII		74
IX		92
X		106
XI		111
XII		119
XIII		130
XIV		141
XV		144
XVI		158
XVII		173
XVIII		176

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
XIX	. . . . .	185
XX	. . . . .	202
XXI	. . . . .	215
XXII	. . . . .	223

CHAPTER I

A few decades ago there lay adjacent to the town of A.——, in the state of Georgia, a fine, large plantation known as Spencer Place. The house was of grey stone, three stories, with deep mullioned windows, wide galleries and Gothic roof. The mansion stood far back in the grounds. One caught but glimpses of it from the road between laurels, live oaks and climbing vines. A broad cement walk led from the gate to the house, and through a double iron gate, between massive stone pillars, a circling driveway led back to spacious stables.

At the time this story opens the lawn was dotted with beds of spring flowers. Back of the house was a large garden, well-filled with flowers, shrubs and early vegetables. A second walk wound down a grassy slope to a park, comprising a rich glade of many acres over which the grass was springing a vivid emerald green. The park held deer and antelope, and was enclosed with a high wire fence. A lake, fed by springs which bubbled diamond clear from a rocky spur, lay sparkling in the sun. From this spur a brook ran babbling to a river which flowed for a mile or more just outside the park fence. A wall separated an orchard from the park, and stately forest trees, some gnarled, like centenarians, tossed their freshly clothed boughs into the blue, adding their glad rustle to Nature's triumphal symphony: Life! Life! ascended from the dust again — laughing, fresh and glorious as on the first morning of creation. Life! Life! elusive, infinite, eternal!

Upon the great porch in front of the mansion, a small

boy stood watching a carriage, of which he had glimpses between the trees as it came up the hill from the city. In the hall the housekeeper and the boy's black nurse were watching it also.

Soon the clatter of hoofs struck the paved driveway. A minute later the vehicle came into full view. Presently it drew up and stopped before the house.

The barouche door swung open; a man in evening dress, followed by a handsomely gowned lady, stepped out and lifted from it a fluffy bundle which he brought and deposited beside the boy.

"Harry, my son, I have brought you a sister. Isn't she sweet?"

The boy did not answer. Dumb with surprise and delight, he stood gazing at the pretty baby.

The lady came forward and ascended the porch steps.

"What a handsome boy he is, Robert!" She bent and put an arm about the boy.

"Harry, I am your new mamma. This is my baby. Her name is Gwin. I will give her to you now. I hope you will be kind to her and love her, for you are a big strong boy, and she is such a wee girl. Will you, dear?"

"Yes ma'am, I will!"

Harry's response was so prompt and hearty it brought a close embrace and a warm kiss from Mrs. Spencer, which, with the gift she had bestowed, won his good little heart. From this hour, he was baby Gwin's guardian, example and hero. Soon the two children were inseparable companions.

. . . . . .

Fifteen times an exhausted calendar had been succeeded by a new one at Spencer Place since the pretty baby came there to live; fifteen times the radiant aster had watched

the poppy fade; and fifteen times the aspens and the elms had changed their foliage, compelling black Dan to skim and skim, to keep the face of the lake bright. Gwin was a tall, slender girl of eighteen now, and Harry Spencer was twenty years old. She could not recollect the day she first saw Spencer Place. Harry could remember the scene on which a sister was bequeathed to him. Looking backward now, he counted that one of the happiest moments of his life. One of his bitterest experiences — the memory of which to this day filled him with self-commiseration, even while it provoked a smile, was when Mr. Finn, a neighborhood busybody, enlightened him as to his and Gwin's relationship. When Gwin learned it, several months later, she shed bitter tears. But she promptly blotted "stepbrother" from her vocabulary, declaring that Harry was the dearest and best boy alive, and he was her brother.

Squire Spencer, the owner of this beautiful home, and his son Harry bore no resemblance to each other. Nature keeps her secret as to the strange alert force which starts the prenatal shuttle to weaving threads into characteristics in her children that will create antithesis and antagonism, even in twin brothers. She will impel one to success by bestowing traits upon him which lift him to eminence, almost without his volition, while she binds another to failure by denying him the faculty to perceive the potential value of those gifts.

The squire was small, wiry, nervous, with keen blue eyes, long thin nose, thin, compressed lips, hair almost flaxen, an ungovernable temper and a high falsetto voice. Harry was dark, and was endowed with a fine, large physique, a brow bright with intellect, a placid temper, a dignified mien, and

a nature which blended virile strength with a tender heart and good judgment.

Although Squire Spencer was purblind along some lines, often permitting his temper to cheat and rule him, he was never blind to commercial values. He was an expert financier. This was a family trait.

Jay Spencer, the squire's great-grandfather, came over from England in an early day, and preempted a part of the land which now was known as Spencer Place. He built the house, which at first was a sort of fort, turreted and loopholed; but it had been rebuilt and modernized, and the grounds beautified, until it was now one of the handsomest homes in the state.

But Jay could not get away from the English way of doing things. He bequeathed Spencer Place to his eldest son, stipulating that this custom was to be adhered to. Consequently, it had been handed down thus to the fourth generation. The will making Harry Spencer the beneficiary was devised the day he was born.

When all things ran smoothly with Squire Spencer he was quite a gentleman; but when they ran awry, he behaved like a fool, and resembled a little fiend. Patience was an unknown quantity in his system.

Mrs. Spencer was a nice dignified lady with great family pride; very religious, but not always tactful — especially when it came to the management of her husband and her daughter. She was very zealous in sowing the "good seed." She scattered it profusely, in season and out of season, unable to discern that there are times when even the "good seed" does harm.

The squire was religious, too, — when he was sick.

"When the Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be;
When the Devil was well, the Devil a monk was he."

So Mrs. Spencer often offered the squire a crumb from the "Bread of Life" when its effect on him was kinetic as if he had sat down upon a sharp pin. However, she did her moralizing when he seemed to be most in need of it, regardless. In all the years that she had lived with Squire Spencer she did not know him and she knew her own daughter little better. She declared that neither the squire nor Gwin was a type. She wondered why Providence had placed her in juxtaposition with two such enigmatical characters?

"Dear! dear!" she sometimes bewailed, "I don't know who Gwinnie takes after — not her mother. It must be some Vauce, generations back."

But there was plenary understanding between Gwin and Harry, and they were "good fellows" together. Each was ready for any sport which the other might suggest, be it wolf-hunt, or chess-game. Gwin was hard to beat at either. She was a fearless horsewoman and a crack shot. Her nature was tender and responsive, her intellect quick and inquiring. She entered sympathetically and understandingly into all Harry's aims and pursuits. They condoned with and advised each other, read and studied together, sang and danced together; took long gallops on horseback together, and were never quite happy when separated.

Gwin, like the squire, had an impetuous temper; but, unlike him, she strove to preserve her dignity when angry. She did not always succeed, for anger is seldom conducive to dignity. But Harry saw charm even in her waywardness. It accentuated her naive individuality and induced little characteristic poises and mannerisms which he called splendid.

Gwin early evinced signs of musical genius. Squire Spencer kept private tutors for his children; so he installed a professor of music in his home and kept him there for years.

The squire had a big heart. He fairly worshiped his wife and children, and provided luxuries for them with lavish hand. But his irascibility was very mortifying to them. It rendered him utterly unreasonable. When angry he cared not what he said nor who happened to hear him. He was Squire Spencer, if you please, descendent from George John, Earl, son of the first Earl Spencer. What did he care for the opinions of mere men!

It was Sunday morning. A few mosquitoes had crept into the squire's room, and had pestered him most of the night. He sprang out of bed before sunup, rushed through his wife's room to the bathroom, making no effort to be quiet. He filled the bathtub, climbed into it, and began to splash and grumble. He declared he was afire all over. The bite of a mosquito was very poisonous to him. He now had the appearance of having had a recent fight with yellowjackets. His face was splotched and swollen. His upper lip was nearly twice its natural thickness, and one eye was almost closed.

When at last the squire emerged from the bathroom, his wife lifted herself to her elbow and gave him a searching glance:

"Why, Robert, what's the matter with your face?"

"What in thunder is the difference to you what's the matter with it?" he snapped, trying to force his stiff upper lip to a more contemptuous curl; not knowing the mosquitoes had given it all the curl that could be desired. The grimace he made was so ludicrous that Mrs. Spencer drew the sheet over her face and fell back convulsed with laughter:

"Robert, you remind me of that hair-lipped pug pup we

used to have. Do look in the mirror. You're a fright. I told you to put out the light, and not read in your bedroom. Why didn't you listen to me?''

Mrs. Spencer should have known better than to attempt to joke the squire and compare him to a hair-lipped pug pup before breakfast — especially on Sunday morning. He was usually out of sorts on Sunday morning, and not very placable any morning, until he had had two cups of coffee and a good breakfast; and that ''I told you so. Why didn't you listen to me?'' he would have resented any time of day.

He sprang at her, snatched the sheet from her face and shook her viciously. ''Don't be a fool, Fanny,'' he yelled. Then he rushed from the room and slammed the door behind him. A few minutes later he went down stairs and started a tour of reconnoiter around the place.

''Yondah he come,'' exclaimed Aunt Roe, giving Jeff a shove, as she saw the squire approaching the kitchen from around the house.

''Git away f'om huh, boy, an' le'm me git dat loaf bread out'n dat slop bucket! He gwine to poke his nose in dah, an' whaevah he hab no business pokin' it. He gwine to 'cuse me th'owin' mo' in de slop'n ten niggahs kin tote in a bushel baskit. I wishes he'd git de reflamtory rheumatis so bad he could'n git his feet to de flo'. Deed I does!''

Hatless and coatless, scowling and growling, the squire went the rounds, declaring that everything was going to rack. The servants were a pack of driveling idiots, not worth the powder to blow them up. If he had not sprung from a family of financiers — and been one himself — he would have been bankrupt long ago. He pitched his nasal plaint high for his wife's ear. It had the desired effect — bringing her out of bed, and into her dressing gown and slippers in a trice. She

could not lie still and listen to such a harangue; for his voice cut the air like a steam whistle.

A tremulous melody was wafted upward from the kitchen. Aunt Roe began to sing, to keep from hearing what the squire was saying:

"Roe." he yelled, "you ill-mannerly coon! stop that clatter when I'm talking!"

Looking up, she caught sight of his disfigured visage, made doubly hideous by his ill temper. It was well for her that he did not see the broad grin which spread over her sable features.

"Foh Lawd sake, Jeff, come huh! Who you reckon done hit him? I's mighty glad, he-he-he-he!"

After having kindled a spark of Satan in the breast of each of the servants, the squire hissed the cat, scolded the dog, and wended his way back up stairs.

"I wishes de reflamtories 'd take him," declared Aunt Roe again, following the squire with her eyes as he went around the house; "an' I wishes Miss Fanny, an' Mistah Harry, an' Miss Gwin'd all go off somewha' visitin' an' leave him huh alone wid me. I shoah would sass him! Deed I would!"

"Ya-s," grinned Jeff. "You wouldn' do nothin' de so't."

"What de reason I wouldn'?"

"Too skeered ub 'im, dat why."

"When he got de sho nuff reflamtories, an' can't git me?"

"Can't git you! yah-ha-ha; can't git you! He hollah to big Tony: Come huh, niggah! bring me dat wench! an' huh come Tony, an' nab Manny, an' tote huh 'long to de bed, an' —he-he-he, an' Mistah Spencah kotch her by de wool, an' ring huh roun' a time or two, an' off come huh head; Now what you gwine to do? Yah-ha-ha!"

"Gwone 'way from huh, boy! you 'ain' talkin' 'bout no reflamtories!"

"Mammy clean fohgot, 'bout dat red silk dress what Mistah Spencah guve huh fuh Christmas," continued Jeff. "She say she nevah would git mad wid him no mo'. But Mammy done fohgot."

Aunt Roe turned away with a sheepish look and had no more to say.

When the squire reached the top of the stairs, he turned into his wife's room. He went to a dressing case, pulled out a drawer, and began to search through it.

"Don't tumble things up so, Mr. Spencer. What are you looking for?"

"A pair of socks that haven't holes in. If I had a wife — "

"There are six pairs without any holes," broke in Mrs. Spencer, pointing to the back of a chair. "They were damp, I hung them there to air."

The squire looked crestfallen. He began to cough — and such a cough! It was a reserve force which he usually called into requisition under trying circumstances. It was harsh, nerve splitting and confusing, as the rasping of a buzz-saw, or the braying of a mule, and the more embarrassed he felt, the louder and harder he coughed.

Mrs. Spencer waited patiently for the excruciating paroxysm to pass, for she had a religious duty to perform:

"Robert," she began, solemnly, as soon as she could be heard. "This is God's day, and you profess to be a Christian."

"Bah! Bah!"

"You are not prepared to die, Robert! If you won't take time to think about your soul Sundays, when will you?"

"Bah! Bah!"

"You'll have to face your Maker one of these days, Robert, or see us die, then you'll think, — when it's too late."

Two big tears rolled down Mrs. Spencer's cheeks, at sight of which the squire's falsetto reached its climax:

"Bah! ! Bah! !" he yelled at the top of his voice.

"Robert Spencer!"

The squire stood half bent, his chin poked out, glaring at her from under his swollen eyelids, and had she not felt that her husband was insulting the Most High, she must again have been convulsed with laughter.

Suddenly he snatched a pair of socks from the back of the chair, and with a snort, stalked out of the room.

. . . . . .

Gwin Vauce, proud, sensitive, highly idealistic, through atavisms from the best old Maryland type, sat in her own room, half dressed; her arms thrown across her dressing-table, and her head bowed upon them, an unwilling listener to all that had just transpired.

While she had been accustomed to these scenes from her earliest recollection they were most distressing to her. She felt each time that one more would drive her to desperation. For they continually marred the symmetry of her finest imagery, which in some vaguely complex crypt of her esoteric self she was striving to visualize, vitalize and to hold involiate.

She was aware that there was but one way out of her present environment to which her mother and stepfather would agree. That way had stood open to her three months ago. But she herself had closed it. Would it open again at her request, she wondered?

With this question in her mind, the girl lifted her head and met the face reflected in her dressing-table mirror. The

face was fair and refined, with deep dark-gray eyes, which sometimes exhibited a play of opal shades. The mouth was sensitive and tender, with full, beautifully arched lips. The hand which, a little later, removed the pins from her auburn hair, was slim, firm and flexible.

Gwin brushed her hair vigorously a few minutes. Then she entered her bathroom, dampened the brush, and wound strand after strand about her finger. Each, when released, fell over her white shoulders a perfect curl. When all was finished, she tied the shining mass back with a ribbon.

When she descended to breakfast, she held a letter in her hand.

"Jerry," she called, as she landed in the lower hall.

Jerry appeared almost immediately.

"Hotel Grande, Jerry — Judge A. J. Kahree," she commanded in an undertone, as she gave the boy the letter; for he could not read writing.

"Yas'm', — all right'm'."

Gwin found Harry and the twins, Bob and Zoe, aged seven, in the dining-room. She bent and kissed the children as they came to meet her, bowed to Harry, and they silently and unconsciously exchanged glances of sympathy.

Mrs. Spencer soon entered the room, and a little later came the squire, Professor Straus, and the children's governess. But no one alluded to the squire's disfigured visage.

Breakfast at Spencer Place was rather a formal affair that morning. No one was in a conversational mood, except the twins, who chattered together in undertones. Gwin ate little, soon excused herself, and left the room. Harry's eyes followed her; he had observed how little breakfast she ate, and somehow he felt anxious.

CHAPTER II

A BLAZE of splendor met Gwin's vision that Sabbath morning as she stepped out upon the porch. Deep amber lights and gold reflections glinted through the aspens; swathing the flower beds and blooming shrubs with new brightness, and hanging each grass blade with jewels.

In the blue depths of distance were the eternal hills, now crested with a rosy flush; between, spreading far to the southward, lay the city, its windows and spires alight with golden glory.

She stood awhile leaning against one of the massive pillars of the porch, watching the shades change. Presently she passed down the steps, and turned toward the park. Half way there she wheeled and stood for a while looking back at the house, Harry's house. It looked not only picturesque and stately, but cozy and homelike. Would it be the same home to him without her? Would he miss her when she was gone, as she would miss him if he should go, and she stay? She loved Spencer Place. It was hard to leave it and the dear ones. But she was thinking that she might soon do it. Her eyes were wet when she turned again. She strolled down to the lake, brushing away tears as she went.

Arriving there, she sat down upon a bench at the water's edge. She had a handful of crackers which she began to crush and scatter on the water. Soon scores of fish of all sizes were breakfasting. Then came a mud hen, followed by a pair of ducks and a dozen ducklings, which frightened the fish away. But the triumph of the hen and the ducks was

fleeting; for the swans were swiftly approaching with squawking, distended necks, and flapping wings, and the smaller birds were glad to escape; while the great oary-footed autocrats came up pompously, looking into Gwin's face with greedy eyes. Smilingly, she threw them a handful of crushed cracker. After the big birds had picked up the last bite and sailed away, Gwin began to study her surroundings again. Her face saddened. "How beautiful!" she exclaimed, as if viewing the scene for the first time. The watery sheet before her scintillated in the sun dazzingly, and the closely cropped grass was like velvet. Three hundred yards away the lake was spanned by a pretty iron bridge. Three hundred yards beyond the bridge was a white boathouse. She could see Harry there now. He stepped into a boat, and waved to her. For the first time, she did not wish to talk with him. "I could not bear it now," she breathed waving at him. She knew he would soon paddle down to where she was; so she rose and hastened up the hill to the house.

Passing around it, she entered the garden. She glanced nervously toward the city, now and then; watching each carriage anxiously that came from that direction, and heaving a sigh of relief when it had passed by.

Gwin gathered a handful of flowers and was about to return to the house, when a cab came swinging up the driveway and stopped. A footman sprang from the box, and opened the carriage door. Gwin's face grew white and frightened as she saw a man of distinguished appearance leave it and traverse the distance to the house. She waited with tense nerves for Jerry's call, which soon came.

"Miss Gwin, gen'leman to see you."

Jerry met Gwin at the garden gate with a silver tray

upon which lay a card with "A. J. Kahree" engraved upon it.

The girl took it up with trembling fingers and stood there a minute gazing at it.

Three months previous to this, Gwin Vauce had received an offer of marriage from the man whose name that card bore, which, to the surprise and chagrin of Mrs. Spencer and the squire, she declined to accept, because she did not love him.

Judge Kahree was a man of wealth, a leader among men, and accustomed to move in the most exclusive circles. While he was appropriately modest with it all, and evinced a pleasing disregard of ego, he was a little surprised at Gwin's rejection of him. This was his first proffer of marriage. Hitherto, he had tabooed it as not worth the risk. But he had a lurking notion that no woman, whom he chose to win, could resist him, and a wide experience had corroborated this opinion.

However, the judge possessed a keen eye, which usually read accurately, especially from femininity's page. He had passed the age when men are apt to look upon women as mysterious. He had come to view them as transparent. But there was nothing in his deportment to indicate this, for he was remarkably chivalrous. In fact, he was lavish of his service of women as any knight of old. In his manner toward the fair sex was always an air of veneration. It was spontaneous as his breath, and as natural to him. It came through the appeal of woman's physical weakness to his sense of protective strength, rather than from a particular desire to please.

Environment had placed him upon the pedestal of a plutocrat; but his big warm heart kept him always demo-

cratic. He prided himself on being a man of strict integrity — that is, according to conventional codes. He was aware that some of those codes are impeached by high opinion. But, like most men of his type, his conscience had been educated according to the standard of those codes, and his sins did not trouble him. He conceded a double standard of virtue for men and women and believed it right. Men were so constituted that moral purity with them was impossible, he claimed.

Judge Kahree's first meeting with Gwin was a chance one, for only a few minutes, at the home of a mutual friend. Although he had exchanged only a few words with her on this occasion, he caught a glimpse of a piquant naïveté in her that pleased him and he determined to see more of her, if possible.

Gwin's social debut had not yet been made. The time was set for the coming winter.

Judge Kahree was acquainted with Squire Spencer, so a broad highway of continuity was soon opened for him which he entered with all the nonchalance with which one sated with curio seeing would wander into a museum. While Gwin Vauce had impressed him as pleasingly unique, in some respects, he did not anticipate finding her essentially different from others of her sex.

He began with an occasional visit to Spencer Place — which was a delightful place to visit — and his calls grew more and more frequent, until he found himself longing to possess sweet Gwin. He seldom had been thwarted in anything of importance; for wealth, physical attractiveness and intellectual ability, go a long way toward rendering one's will supreme. So, when he was forced to face a realization that he must relinquish hope of winning her, "the bead and

sparkle'' went out of his life, and the three subsequent months was a period of unrest. But there was something in Gwin's note that caused hope to revive. The missive ran:

''Spencer Place, July 10, 18—.

Judge Kahree,
Dear friend:

If it is not asking too much, I wish you would call at Spencer Place at your earliest convenience. I have something to say to you which I can not write.

Sincerely,
Gwin Vauce.''

The judge lost no time in obeying this summons, and soon was awaiting her presence in the cool, dim light of the drawing-room at Spencer Place.

She came to him trembling like a culprit.

''I am prompt, you see,'' smiled the judge, as he arose to greet her, wondering what her painful embarrassment could mean?

The hot color played over her face and neck in waves as she gave him her hand.

With his accustomed gallant manner, he led her to a chair and placed her in it. Then he sat down and waited expectantly.

While drunk with indignation, she had flung a challenge at Fate, who had accepted, and now confronted her — not as a dim shadow — shape, but a substantial entity, stronger than her penitence. How flippantly she had tossed the gauntlet when alone with her anger! and now — scarcely an hour later — result was demanding his wage, while laughing her regrets to scorn.

What was she to do? What could she say? Judge Kahree was waiting for some explanation. She could not explain, "Never! — Never!" she thought.

"You will think — I don't know what?—" she began, her eyelids drooping and her cheeks aflame. "I am going to ask you to pardon me for sending that note, and beg you not to question me."

The judge looked dismayed. He replied calmly; but with sinking heart:

"Do you expect me to submit to this gracefully?"

She shot him a half-frightened glance; but remained silent.

"This is anything but a trivial matter to me, Gwinnie. Haven't I a right to insist on an explanation, under the circumstances? Don't you think you owe it to me to explain?"

She drew a deep fluttering sigh.

"Ye-s, — I reckon so, — but —"

Again Judge Kahree awaited; — again her eyes lifted and met his a moment, then sought the floor.

"Well!" he persisted, determined to force her to elucidate the matter, if possible, "I insist on knowing what you meant by that note."

Gwin's hand went to her throat. The lump there was making enunciation difficult. It was clear that Judge Kahree would not be put off. She realized that an explanation was due him. But how to couch it so as to obviate the danger of humiliating him or herself was a question.

"Think me a little fool, Judge; and let it go at that."

A wan smile flickered across Gwin's lips, and she extended her hand to him.

"You will not be frank with me, Gwinnie. After bringing

me here, you will not explain why, even when you know how much it means to me. You know, too, that I am one of your best friends.''

He clasped her proffered hand a moment, then dropped it, and straightened back in his chair.

''What shall I do?'' thought the perplexed girl, whose weight of responsibility was too great for immediate reply.

The judge turned his face to a window and sat looking out.

Gwin's eyes went to him immediately and looked him over — very much as she had looked Spencer Place over, an hour ago — as if for the first time.

But Judge Kahree lost nothing by her scrutiny. He was flawless in appearance, even to the eye of a fastidious connoisseur. Just the sort of a man a bright girl of fine taste would admire. Gwin did admire him — always had. It occurred to her now as strange that she did not love him in the start. She did not know that she was gifted with rare acuteness of analytical discrimination; that the subconscious eye of her dual self had ''penetrated the shell of outer elegance'' to a Sybaritic vein in his character; and that so long as she remained passive to the influence of this mysterious cognition — which we all possess to a greater or less degree — it continued to remonstrate with her against her heart's permitting its tendrils to clasp his proffered affection. But the occurrences of the morning were so obsessing her that she now unconsciously was silencing the faithful mystic monitor in her bosom with the voice of the grosser adviser — mortal mind. She fell to studying the judge with quickened interest, while a sort of new-born susceptibleness began to stir her imagination.

After several minutes silence the judge turned to Gwin.

"Well?" His tone was imperative as well as interrogatory. "I still insist that you tell me what it was you had to say to me that you could not write."

It had to be done; there was no escape. Her grip on the flowers she held tightened, and she began stammeringly:

"Has—your—mind—undergone—any—essential change in—in—the last—three months—re—regarding myself?"

"Yes; one can not live three months unchanged."

Gwin gave a little gasp, and he added quickly:

"But my affection for you has not cooled. The same mad love I expressed in this room three months ago, is in my heart now. Your message gave me new hope. Am I again doomed to disappointment?"

Without replying, the girl arose, took a vase from a mantel, excused herself, stepped into the hall, and filled the vase from a water-cooler.

"I have behaved childishly;" she acknowledged, as she returned and placed the vase, with the flowers in it, upon a a table.

The judge held out a hand for one.

She drew a great dewy rose from the vase and reached it toward him.

The next instant he was upon his feet beside her, with the hand that held the rose clasped in both of his and pressed to his bosom; his face was beautiful with tender emotion, and the girl saw it — saw the beauty of it.

"Now Gwinnie, what was the secret of that message?"

"Impulse; but I can't explain . . . . Please do not ask me to do so!"

He released her hand, took the rose, thanked her, and with deep inhalation, buried his nose among its petals.

"Impulse?" he repeated. . . "That you might love me, after all?"

"I — I — don't know, I'm not sure."

Judge Kahree looked into Gwin's face a moment with keen directness. Then he turned again to the wide-spread loveliness of the landscape.

However, the more he thought of it the more he was inclined to a cheerful view of the impulse she had mentioned.

"Well Gwinnie," he said, at last turning to her with a smile, "suppose we drop bygones and begin again. Whatever prompted the penning of that note, it's all right with me. I love and trust you, as I hope you will love and trust me."

She opened her lips to reply; but closed them again, and stole a glance at his face. His eyes were upon her. Her's fell.

Judge Kahree proposed a stroll to the park.

As Gwin and he passed down the shaded walk, Harry, who sat upon a balcony reading, marked an unfinished sentence with his index finger, while his eyes followed them till they disappeared. Then, instead of resuming the interrupted passage, he closed the volume, tossed it to a table, and sat for awhile in perplexed rumination.

What could it mean that Judge Kahree was at Spencer Place again? Then Harry remembered having seen Gwin give Jerry a letter in the hall as she came to breakfast. Could it be possible that the judge was here in response to a summons from her? Had she discovered that she loved him, after all? Harry was seized with inward trembling. Dear Gwinnie, how he had always loved her! and how he was beginning to hope that her sweetness was to be his—all his!

Judge Kahree and Gwin strolled on to the park, and

sat down near the water upon a bench in the shade. An interesting colloquy was soon begun, for the judge was a fine conversationalist. As the sun climbed higher — showering a flood of shimmering gold upon the lake — converse grew desultory. Finally, it lost spontaneity entirely, and they sat silently watching the oary-footed joy-sailors skimming back and forth over the water.

Gwin was conscious of supreme content. She never before had realized how attractive Judge Kahree was. The disparity in their ages, and he being — as she thought — so superior to her, in every respect, his first declaration of love had come to her as a surprise. She had not thought of him as a possible suitor — until he declared himself — and she had answered as her heart dictated.

She now glanced at him and found his gaze fixed and far away. She fell to studying him again furtively. He sat in a lounging attitude, one arm thrown over the back of the bench. The most aesthetic critic could have found nothing in his personality to criticise. So it was not difficult for Gwin with the large ideality which colored her mental conception of manly perfection — of what ought to be — to bring him into conformity with her mental picture. She was in the halcyon youth-time, the florescent future was dazzling her eyes, while behind her was the goading of those trying home scenes. Is it any wonder that she experienced a thrill of pleasure at the thought that this handsome intellectual man was hers for the taking?

When a carriage came winding up the hill from toward the city, bearing Mrs. Spencer and the twins home from Church, the judge arose and glanced at the sun, then at his watch.

"Why, it's one o'clock, who would have thought it!"

"Don't go!" Gwin insisted, as he took up his hat and gloves, "we dine at half past one."

"Thank you, I can't stay to-day." and he hastened to his carriage, which was waiting.

Gwin went to the house, and up to her mother's room. She found Mrs. Spencer removing and putting away her hat and gloves.

"Judge Kahree just left here," Gwin broke out, "I sent for him, in a fit of anger. I don't know what he thinks of such an unheard-of proceeding. But I have given him to understand that I will marry him, if I can learn to love him."

"Learn to love him! — a man like Judge Kahree! I can't understand how any girl with taste could help loving him. But, Gwinnie, you are Greek and Latin to me — and have been from a baby."

"The judge was very considerate and did not question me, although he had a right to do so. So I was saved the necessity of resorting to prevarication, to preserve the family reputation."

Mrs. Spencer failed to observe the little curve of scorn upon her daughter's lip. "Oh, I hope you would not do that!" was her tactless reply, and Gwin's eyes opened wide and blazed with anger. "I am delighted that you and the judge have come together again. But you take things here at home too seriously. There are few homes more pleasant than ours. Nearly all families have their jars. Besides, your notions about love are fantastic. You expect too much of yourself. I advise you not to cultivate that sickly sentiment which poets and mad men rave about."

"Mamma! how can you say that after having heard Mrs. Snow's lecture, 'Love's white wing'? That was an eye opener to me. Her lecture set me to studying. I bought some

of her books, and I have read them. Knowing what I do now, I could never marry without deep, devoted love."

"I think young girls are sweeter and better off not to know some things, I was sorry I took you to that lecture. It was fine, I admit, and true, no doubt, but I did not like you to hear such a mess. I had no idea when I took you there that she would talk on that subject."

Mrs. Spencer was treating this matter as unthinking parents usually do.

"That lecture did not coarsen me," averred Gwin. "Neither did the books which I have since read on the subject coarsen me. I now know that marriage of juxtaposition is a crime, not only against one's self, but against innocent posterity. That lecture and those books have saved me from the crime of marriage without love, to escape the agony of scenes like that this morning. So, my dear mother, it's rather too soon for you to begin to count on Judge Kahree for your son-in-law. I admire him; whether I shall do more remains to be seen. But I can assure you I'll try."

The girl laughed softly — a bitter mocking laugh.

Dinner was called, and mother and daughter went down stairs together. The daughter humming snatches of *"Vas ist Liebe?"* She sang, to keep the tears back.

CHAPTER III

THE AFTERNOON was sultry and breezeless. Gwin and Harry each took a book and sought a shaded spot on the lawn, where a playing fountain stirred and freshened the atmosphere. It was a sweet secluded nook, where whirring wings, trills, twitters, and laving splashes, mingled with the voice of falling water in soothing harmony, and where fawns and rodent came to drink. Benches and rustic chairs were scattered here and there about the marble reservoir. Harry and Gwin sat down and talked awhile, then both fell to reading, and read in silence until the afternoon was far spent.

At last Gwin closed the volume she was perusing, and fixed her gaze to the distant hills. She gave a little start when Harry said suddenly:

"A penny for your thoughts, girlie."

"They're not worth the price, Harry; I hate to beat you out of your money."

"I'll take the risk."

"Oh, well then, I've been reading the story of Launcelot and Guinevere, and, O Harry!"

"That story's fabulous, what do you care about it!"

She did not reply.

"Gwinnie, what's the matter with you to-day?"

"Why?"

Now, Harry failed to reply. He was regarding her with grave eyes.

Judge Kahree had come up unobserved in time to hear this colloquy. He stood leaning against a tree, a few feet away, fanning himself with a palm leaf fan.

Gwin swallowed twice, to get rid of the lump in her throat so she could speak clearly.

"The conditions suggested in that story are the saddest of all things. They are heart-rending! If I talk about it any more, I shall cry."

Gwin lifted her eyes, and they fell full into those of the judge. She sprang to her feet, and the book fell from her lap. Was it surprise at seeing the judge? or was it an expression she met in his face that startled her? For she was startled, and she looked it.

The judge straightened up, removed his hat, bowed to Gwin, and came forward with a hand outstretched to Harry, who had risen, to meet him.

"Good evening, Judge, glad to see you," said Harry, as their palms met.

"Thank you; the pleasure is reciprocal. I haven't seen you for an age, Harry."

"It has been some time; have a seat, sir."

The judge accepted the chair Harry proffered, Harry sat down upon a bench near; Gwin picked up the fallen book, resumed her seat, and they talked awhile.

Harry soon rose, said goodnight, and left the couple who continued to converse for some time. Then, as they had done in the morning, they lapsed into silence, as if by tacit agreement. The sun grew orange, and sank behind amber clouds, the moon and stars came out, casting a silvery sheen over two meditative beings, who — to all appearance — were oblivious to each other's presence.

The spell was broken by Aunt Roe, who came around

the house bearing a small table, followed by Jeff, who bore a tray piled with dainties.

Roe placed the table between Gwin and the judge, spread a white cloth, placed a vase of roses in the center, and proceeded to surround it with delicacies from the tray. Then she and Jeff lit the lamps at the fountain, and withdrew.

"So the Arthurian legend had a depressing effect upon you," remarked Judge Kahree, as Gwin poured and handed him a glass of iced tea. "A pity it is that so rare a character as that of Arthur, of Round Table fame, should be lost to history while it abounds with Launcelots."

The girl's eyes opened wide.

"Rare! — Are good men so rare?"

"Those of the King Arthur type are. He was simply an ideal; the tale of the Round Table was a dream, fantastic as the Excalibur; Guinevere and Launcelot are true to nature, however."

"W-h-a-t?" Her questioning eyes sought his.

A debilitated feeling had led the judge to take one glass of wine too much just before starting for Spencer Place, and that fulsome remark was a result. Keen, cool, debonair, not addicted to excessive wine-bibbing, an unequable remark from him was unusual. But the fiendish elfkin which now was perched upon his tongue refused to desist. At his next remark a starry sparkle flashed up in Gwin's eyes.

"Gwinnie, your innocence goads me to turn inconoclast. It seems a pity, but you will learn — and that very soon — that this age is vile as that of Nero; Modernity tractile in cults essentially rotten; Supereminence purblind; Chastity, passing by on the other side, like the priest and the Levite,

merely lifts her delicate eyebrows and sighs resignedly, while she assumes an ignorance she does not possess.''

''Why Judge!''

She leaned forward for closer scrutiny of his face.

''You do not mean this? You certainly would not have me to believe all that your words imply, — that society is utterly debased, and there is no virtue in the world?''

He laughed, and that laugh expressed bitter cynicism.

''Oh no!''

The judge had eaten little; but he placed his napkin upon the table, then turned half away and sat silent awhile; his fine head and military shoulders silhouetted against the pale light of a western sky.

Perplexity held Gwin inert a few seconds. She looked the judge over curiously. What did he mean by talking to her in this way? What had come over him? This was so unlike him. She broke out a little impetuously:

''In your sweeping implication you make no exception— even of yourself. If what you insinuate is true, our paths have reached a point of wide divergence.''

The judge quickly sensed the havoc the wine was playing. He shifted and faced the girl.

''Of course, Gwinnie, there are exceptions. Did you understand me to say there is none?''

''Yes, that was the inference I drew; and I think those remarks have given me a right, under the circumstances, to ask you a personal question: Are you morally pure?''

Judge Kahree was not prepared for that question. It shocked him into sobriety. Again he shifted in his chair, and cleared his throat, which suddenly had become dry and husky.

''Am I morally pure? . . . . Well, Gwinnie, just here

faith must play a prominent part. If I were immoral, I, doubtless, would be base enough to deny it—under existing circumstances. Don't you think I would?''

''No, I can't imagine you uttering a falsehood.''

''Then can you imagine me immoral in other respects?''

''Judge, you are unfair. You must remember it was your own remarks that suggested that question — made it imperative, under the circumstances.''

''My remarks a few minutes ago were absurd — ridiculous. I have not felt well to-day. Just before starting for Spencer Place I drank two glasses of wine, it was too much. I admit that I invited that question, which, under the circumstances, was not irrelevant.''

Deep regret was in Judge Kahree's heart that he could not truthfully answer that question in the affirmative. He was a noble man at heart; one who regarded deliberate falsehood in its true light, and as his brain grew clearer, his reply to the punitive query he had so blunderingly elicited from that innocent girl, became replete with tremendous responsibility, and was fraught with Rhadamanthine meaning. Judge Kahree was a leader among men. His honor was considered unimpeachable, his word was seldom — if ever — doubted. But now, so incomparably sweet seemed the future with that question eliminated that he began to produce a few mental arguments against inflexible justice.

''With this girl to dominate my life, my quiescent spiritual fires would rekindle and blaze up; my noblest self would be continually called into requisition; and my life set in a halo of glory, as it were. Then should I not, in equity to my better nature, let matters now take their course? Gwin's nature and mine are in perfect harmony — except for this one discrepancy.

"Young — and sheltered as she has been — how little Gwinnie knows of the social status quo! Of temptation; of the fiery force which has impelled me to acts for which I now stand before a bar of justice. . . . . A reverse order has come, in which, instead of sitting upon the bench, I am culprit, and this innocent girl, whose deep opal eyes at times seem able to penetrate my soul, is my judge."

He began to wonder if he really had sinned. He never had thought of it in that light. To his fair judge, it obviously was a serious matter — unpardonable.

Judge Kahree knew there was neither insincerity nor prudery in this girl. She was as free from affectation and artificiality as a bird, and while he deplored that question, he admired the moral fearlessness which made asking it possible. He felt as if he had lived several hours of tense vital experience, since coming to Spencer Place this evening. He now introduced a cheerful topic.

Gwin's mind had been insubordinate most of the day. Her nerves had run riot and she began to feel exhausted. But the low tones of his voice soothed her. A new medley of emotions thrilled through her being. Was this the first flutter of Love's white wing in her bosom? She wondered. It was a pleasing sensation.

But the thought of leaving Gwin with the first deliberate falsehood he ever had uttered still warm upon his lips was obsessing the judge. Conscience declared in favor of immediate relinquishment of her. But his heart was pleading against it with all its mad fervor. How like sacrilege it seemed to tear down that mystic altar of confidence which he felt was a holy thing, and if left unprofaned, would dominate every act of his future life for righteousness. Yes, he felt sure of it.

Converse had lapsed. For several minutes there was silence, during which the finest that was in Arrel Kahree rose to ascendant and asserted its power of veto. He turned suddenly. His face was pale and tense.

"Little girl," he began with fixed resolve, "I must admit —"

"Good evening, Gwinnie. Good evening, Judge;" and Professor Straus, puffing and blowing, dropped upon the end of a bench near them. "What a terribly sultry evening this is;" he grumbled. "I went for a short walk, and I'm all alather with perspiration. . . I think there'll be a storm before morning;" and he mopped his face and neck vigorously with a very damp handkerchief.

Professor Straus had been a member of Squire Spencer's household so many years he seemed to the family quite like a relative.

"How warm and fatigued you are!" Gwin poured and carried him a glass of ice water. "Have you been to lunch?"

"Not yet."

"Here, take my place. It is cooler out here;" Gwin removed from the table the soiled dishes and napkins. "If you gentleman will excuse me about two minutes I will bring some clean dishes and a napkin. Mother kindly sent our lunch here. As you see, she gave us an over abundant supply."

The professor thankfully accepted Gwin's proffered chair at the table, and she hurried away toward the house.

A few minutes later as she started to return with some dishes in her hands, she ran down a flight of outside steps, which led from the dining-room and tripping, she fell. A crash of breaking dishes, and an outcry from Aunt Roe, sent the judge and the professor to the house.

They found Gwin lying at the foot of the steps unconscious.

Judge Kahree lifted her in his arms, carried her to the living-room, and placed her upon a couch. While the professor — forgetting the heat — ran to his room, and returned with a bottle of liquid. Aunt Roe brought a spoon, and the professor placed some of the liquid between Gwin's lips.

"She swallows all right," he said, trying to pacify Mrs. Spencer, who was weeping and wringing her hands—unable to render any assistance. The squire, little cooler, sputtered about, running out at one door and in at another, calling "Jeff, Dan, Jerry. Someone to bring a doctor."

It being Sunday, and a little late now, the servants were all away, except Aunt Roe. So Judge Kahree came to the rescue:

"My carriage is waiting down the driveway. I will send for a physician. Whom would you prefer?"

"Thank you, Judge, tell your man to bring the first one he finds."

By this time Gwin had opened her eyes.

"My ankle," she murmured.

It was not long until a doctor arrived, and the injured ankle—which proved to be sprained—was skilfully bandaged. A blue spot was upon Gwin's forehead which the doctor said would have been fatal had it been a half inch lower.

Harry — who had been floating alone in a canoe on the lake, dejectedly pondering this, his first crucial problem, and the subtle sarcasm which fate was now flinging in his face — appeared upon the threshold of the living room. He paused. His eyes opened wide with alarm.

"What has happened to Gwinnie?"

Gwin laughed.

"Nothing much; don't be frightened. I sprained my ankle a little — that's all."

"Good evening Doctor," and, with a bow to the judge, Harry drew near to the couch, bent above it, and stroked Gwin's hair caressingly.

"How did you come by that bruise so near your temple?"

"Tumbled down the steps. But don't look so solemn, brother. I'm not dead yet."

"Why, you poor little girl!"

Harry turned to get a chair. The judge's keen eye swept his face and saw the love-light there.

It was late by this time. So Judge Kahree took his departure, the family retired and left Gwin and Harry alone together.

Troubled thoughts of her had obsessed him all day, he had meant to have a talk with her—ask her some personal questions, but for some inexplicable reason he had failed to do so. Possibly her strength of counter psychic-suggestion had deterred him. He now ventured a remark which was calculated to lead up to the subject.

"This has been a day of extreme trials to you, or I have misconstrued!"

Gwin lifted her hand in a deprecatory gesture which a moment later, fluttered softly down to the back of Harry's hand.

Never had her touch thrilled him as it now did. But a strange inertness seized him and he made no further attempt to express what he had intended to say.

Usually, when Gwin's impulses had carried her where her cooler judgment refused to go — as they had that morn-

ing — in her regretful after-moments she flew to Harry as a sort of father confessor; knowing that even though he expressed disapproval, she would receive sympathy and wise counsel. Her precipitance of the morning was now whispering punitively to her. She wished she could tell Harry all about it — it would be such a relief. She always had confided everything of any importance to him. But this would humiliate them both; for it would necessitate reference to those unhappy occurrences in the home, and both avoided that subject. However, she must have Harry's opinion on another matter if she could manage to broach the subject in a way that would appear fortuitous. She began to feel drowsy, and her mind was less alert than usual. After casting about for a suitable preliminary, she finally broke into the subject abruptly.

"Do you think, Harry, that true marriage is foreordained? Oh, that wasn't what I wanted to ask! Do you think that no love is genuine, except that which recognizes its mate at first sight? Or do you think that the affection which requires second sight — cultivation, you might say, is equally genuine?"

Harry shot her a keen glance.

"I don't know. I never have given the subject much thought. But it strikes me that a sentiment which requires working up is spurious."

Gwin lifted her eyes, which looked dark and dreamy now, to Harry's face. He gazed straight into them.

"What suggested that thought?"

"Oh-o-o, I happened to think of it, that's all!"

"Gwinnie, what are you going to do with Judge Kahree?"

"What am I going to do with him? I don't know that

I'm obliged to do anything with him, I'm not his guardian. If you have doubts of his ability to take care of himself you had better consult the probate court;'' she laughed banteringly.

Harry sat twirling his watch-charm nervously.

''Are you thinking of marrying the judge, after all?''

''I — don't — know; — I — might,'' she admitted reluctantly. ''I joined him on probation this morning. As an inducement, I promised to be good.'' this with a little forced laugh, which grated on Harry's ear.

''You are bethrothed?''

She did not answer for a few seconds.

''Well, — it may amount to that.''

''Then you love him; that goes without asking.''

''It ought to, as well as you know me,'' she evaded. ''Love must go before marriage, with me.''

It was well that Gwin could not see Harry's face distinctly; or rather, it was a pity they did not know each other's hearts at this time of all others.

The following morning Judge Kahree sent his valet to Spencer Place to inquire after Gwin. That evening the judge presented his card there in person, and was conducted to a south porch where Gwin sat, her hair coiled high upon her head, and her bandaged foot propped upon an ottoman. The other foot, prettily slippered, was stretched out and was wagging nervously. As the judge approached her, her face lit up and she extended a hand to him. ''How glad I am to see you!''

''Listen! . . . . That's Black-devil pawing and squealing in the stable. I feel like that. To be tied, after nearly eighteen years of untrammeled freedom, is excruciating! One day of it has exhausted my patience. I never before

was confined to the house a day. No wonder Black-devil rages.''

''Yours is an unusual health record,'' the judge opined, as he seated himself. ''But Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, vote us what they will, and we must take it blindly — as we take our mates in marriage.

''Yes; of course, we are forced to take blindly what the Fates send us. But they can't force us to take our partners for life blindly. Can they?''

''Perhaps not. But we usually do it.''

There followed another succession of wild snorts and impatient squeals from the stables.

''His voice is expressive, as well as blatant,'' the judge observed.

''Yes; poor thing! How he is longing to gallop on the plains with his sporty friends! He was taken from the herd only six months ago. Don't I know how to pity him though! In another day or two I fear I shall be screeching and pawing the air insanely. . . . Did you ever see our Black-devil?''

''No; I have heard a great deal about him. If you will excuse me, I will go and take a look at him now,'' and the judge rose.

''I wish you would. Please take him an apple and some candy. There on the table behind you are both. . . . I wish I could go with you.''

''You can. I'll carry you. I carried you last evening,'' he informed her, as he turned to the table and put an apple and some candy in a pocket of his coat.

''Oh!'' The interjection came with a shrug and a little frown.

He swung round with a smile. ''Shall I carry you?''

''Heavens!'' Now the interjection came with a wave of

color. "Thank you. I can exist a few hours longer without seeing Black-devil!"

"Ha-ha-ha," was the judge's reply, as he left the porch. He soon returned.

"That horse is a magnificent creature!"

"Do you think I could ride him, Judge?"

"No!"

"But I'm going to try it as soon as I'm well. Last evening when Papa thought I was about killed, I drew him down and whispered: "May I ride Black-devil when I am well? 'That you shall, Gwinnie!' he answered. He has repented of that promise before this. But I shall hold him to it."

"Gwinnie, promise me that you will not attempt to mount that horse unless I am with you."

"Certainly, if you wish to witness the exercise. But he's not bad now. They gave him that name before he was tamed."

"If all reports are true, he's not tamed."

"But all reports are not true," she defended.

CHAPTER IV

A FEW weeks later Jerry delivered a second note from Gwin to Judge Kahree.

"Judge Kahree,

"Dear friend:" she wrote. "I expect to mount Black-devil to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. Since you have expressed a wish to witness the adventure you are solemnly requested to be present. — G. V."

Gwin's ankle was now fully recovered, and she was in the best of health and spirits.

At eight o'clock the ensuing morning, as Judge Kahree was riding up the driveway at Spencer Place, Big Tony led high-stepping, beautiful Black-devil from the stable toward a marble mounting-block, up the steps of which Gwin ran nimbly.

When the horse reached the block, Gwin stood feeding him lumps of sugar, stroking his glossy neck, and talking to him soothingly, until the judge came up. When, with a blithsome "Good morning, Judge," she took the bridle firmly in her hand, and sprang lightly into the saddle, as with a laugh she said:

"Gentlemen, the curtain has risen on the first act. The show is on!"

"I hope it may continue to stay on," smiled the judge.

All the negroes on the place were grouped near the stable, watching Black-devil and prophesying evil.

"I nevah spects to see dat chile alive no mo,." wailed Aunt Roe. "Black-devil gwine to kill huh now!"

Tony still held Black-devil's bit.

"Don't let loose of the bit, Tony, till Judge Kahree takes the halter," called Mrs. Spencer from a second story window.

The judge lifted his hat to Mrs. Spencer; while a derisive little laugh fell from Gwin's lips.

Squire Spencer and Harry came up at this juncture.

"Gwinnie," the squire broke out fretfully, "as many horses as there are in these stables, I can't see why the deuce you want to risk your neck riding this devil?"

"He's not a devil, Papa Spencer; he's all right," the girl defended again. "I can manage him. You consented to my riding him — you know you did . . . . Let loose of that bit, Tony! Papa's fixing to go back on his word; that is clear. If we don't get away from here in one minute, he'll make me dismount."

"Father," put in Harry, "you shouldn't have consented to her riding this horse; he's not safe."

"There you go!" snapped the squire. "If Black-devil breaks her neck, I'm to blame!"

"Tony, obey me! Drop that bit this instant!" Gwin again commanded.

The judge reached over and grasped the end of the halter and Tony's hand left the bit.

Black-devil lifted his head and shook it, as if to make sure that one restraining hand was gone. Then, with a bow and a gingerly spring into the air, he began a sort of side-stepping dance. Gwin held the bridle firmly and talked to him in a cheery voice; and when Judge Kahree's horse started off, Black-devil pranced along beside him, quite orderly.

" 'There was a young lady from Niger,
Who went for a ride on a tiger;' " sang a boy across the

street, as the equestrians rode through the driveway gate, which Dan was holding open:

"'They returned from the ride
With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger;'" shouted the boy, as Gwin and the judge rode away laughing.

The morning was gorgeous. The air was scented with blooming fruit trees, sweet wild flower, spicy herbage and freshly turned earth; all asprinkle with dew and aquiver with springtime's vital spark. Bob Whites, meadow larks, orioles, robins, mocking birds, and cardinal birds, whistled and trilled on every hand; while glossy jackdaws cawed the eternal Spring Song from sunbathed stake and limb.

The two horses galloped along together, their shod feet ringing rhythmically on the paved road. They had traveled a couple of miles, and Black-devil was behaving beautifully. So Gwin suddenly leaned over his neck, and unclasped his halter from its ring, leaving the strap in Judge Kahree's hand.

"Gwinnie! Gwinnie!" began the judge, protestingly.

"There's not a bit of use in your holding this horse," she interrupted. "You have seen for yourself that it is not necessary."

"I'm not at all sure of that," he demurred.

"I can manage *him*," she insisted, with a strong accent on "him;" as her eyes threw the judge a playful challenge.

"Obviously, there are others;" he laughed. "I am surprised at your management of Squire Spencer." He held out the halter strap; "and here is evidence of your management of me."

"Uh!" she shrugged, "You and Black-devil together are not a circumstance compared to Papa. I know better than to attempt to manage him. I got the upper hand in this little

deal, because he was frightened. He's a scary little fellow when one of his family is ill."

Gwin had loved Black-devil from her first glimpse of him. "You beautiful fellow!" she chirped, as she now stroked his glossy neck. "Judge, this horse has been shamefully maligned. He's wild but not vicious.

"Gwinnie, let me snap the halter on him again."

"Judge, there's no danger. I am surprised at you."

They now came to a Gipsy camp and drew rein to ask for a cup of water from a nearby spring.

As Judge Kahree dropped a coin into the cup, and passed it back to the boy who had served them, a tall woman with a red scarf wound about her head in a sort of turban stopped beside Gwin's horse:

"I must tell your fortune, Lady."

Gwin laughed, removed her glove, and extended her palm, for the woman's inspection.

"No," objected the Gipsy, "not in the presence of the gentleman. Come with me!" and with long strides, she moved away from the judge a few yards.

"Shall I go? — Will you excuse me?" Gwin asked him.

"Yes, — yes!"

"I don't believe in it at all. I'll go, just for the novelty," and she rode to the spot where the Gipsy stood awaiting her.

Presently Judge Kahree saw Gwin's face flush scarlet. She snatched her hand from the Gipsy's clasp, threw a coin at her feet, and turned her horse toward the road. The Judge rode after her and soon was beside her. When he jocularly questioned her regarding her fortune, she silently shook her head, her face again flushed, and her gaiety was gone for the day.

A few minutes later, there came the sharp report of a gun

near by. With a wild leap, Black-devil took the bit between his teeth, and was off and out of sight around a curve in the road, which led through a body of timber, before Judge Kahree scarcely had time to realize what had happened. Pale with apprehension, he followed, putting his horse to its utmost speed.

Soon a turn in the road brought Black-devil in sight. He was standing by the roadside — the saddle empty. On near approach the judge discovered Gwin lying face downward in the grass on the opposite side of the road; her hair was disheveled, her hat off and blowing down the road.

Vaulting from his horse, the judge sprang to her side.

She immediately lifted herself to her elbows and glanced up at him quizzically: "I told you I could manage him. Didn't I do it? . . . . But I was so exhausted, by the time he stopped running that I slid from his back; led him to the fence; threw the bridle over that post; staggered to the shade, and fell down, almost breathless. He didn't attempt to throw me. He was merely trying to escape with his life, poor thing! He knows what a shot means."

Observing the judge's pallor, Gwin sprang to her feet, and brushed the hair from her face. "Oh, I am so sorry I gave you this fright. It was childish of me to behave so. Pardon me, dear friend, I beg of you!"

The judge's force of vital resistance was quite exhausted. With a long stride forward he reached Gwin's side. Without speaking, he threw both arms about her and crushed her to him. Then he released her, went down the road and brought her hat to her.

"We'll change horses now," he said.

"No we wont. If one of us is to be hurt by Black-devil,

it sha'n't be you. Besides, he knows now that I can manage him. I want him to keep that in his mind."

"Ha-ha-ha," replied the judge.

Still laughing, he crossed the road to where Black-devil stood, looking demure as a pet calf. After examining the saddle girth, he led the horse to a fallen log, where Gwin stood waiting.

They arrived at Spencer Place in time for noon dinner.

The following morning Judge Kahree stood meditating alone before an open window in the lobby of his hotel. While his binocular vision rested upon a stretch of green lawn — beyond which was a side-walk and a busy street — what he really saw was a girl and a man standing beside a country road. The man sprang forward and crushed the girl to his bosom, and with the rich flame which swept her face, in the moment he held her, came a little gasp, and a play of strange lights flickered over the gray in her eyes. Judge Kahree's lips were compressed now, and his hands clenched. Suddenly he swung around:

"But oh, I must tell her! — I must tell her the truth, and give her up! . . . . Great God!"

He rang for a servant, ordered his carriage, and was driven to Spencer Place.

Judge Kahree found Gwin in the park, sitting on the grass by the lake, reading "Little Boy Blue," to a pair of profoundly interested auditors — the twins — Bob sat close beside her, an arm about her waist, his curly head nestled against her bosom; while Zoe, with her chubby arms crossed over Gwin's lap, sat gazing into her face with rapt attention.

When Gwin saw the judge approaching, she sprang to her feet, shook out her skirts, gave the book to Bob to take to the house, and while he and Zoe went skipping away, she

met the judge, and they sat down upon a bench near the water's edge.

"Did you tell the folks at home that Black-devil ran away with you?"

"No."

"I wish you wouldn't ride him again."

"Oh, the danger of that is over. Papa has read the law to me, and it's like that of the Medes and Persians — unalterable."

Judge Kahree intended his call at Spencer Place that morning to be brief. He came to divulge the truth, which, of course, would end all between him and Gwin.

Only those endowed with the finer sensibilities can appreciate Judge Kahree's position at this time. The grosser sort — the common herd — can never be made to understand a man who would, for a minute, entertain the thought of voluntarily confessing the truth under such circumstances.

"There is something I wish to" . . . .

"Mo'nin', Judge," interrupted a blithsome voice, "scuse me," and a little white-robed form darted past Judge Kahree, and dropped a great flaming sunflower into Gwin's lap. "It's the first bloom on my tree, Sister; I want you to have it."

The judge reached out, and drew the child to him. He talked to her a few minutes, when Bob's voice was heard calling her and she ran away; and upon this trivial happening was hung a tragedy in two lives. One minute more and Judge Kahree would have admitted the truth. When the acme of enthusiasm in an arduous duty is reached in failure, purpose is apt to wane to its death. How sad the knowledge that fortuitous human destiny may turn upon as slight an issue as the tossing of a flower from the hand of a baby! And thus the pseudo-ethics of cunning primeval seer and sage is thrown

back upon their sunken graves. The stones cry out against them, and our "Fiery Cloudy Pillar" melts.

But mayhap some critic will opine that Judge Kahree, being a strong character, should have said what he had to say, regardless of interruptions.

Yes; but he didn't . . . .

It must be remembered that love is one of the strongest forces with which men have to contend. While a true answer to the punitive question he had blunderingly elicited from Gwin became replete with tremendous responsibility at times; at other times his mind produced plausible arguments against inflexible justice.

One serene night as Gwin and he stood together upon a porch at Spencer Place, he took her hand, drew it through his arm and held it as he silently led her down the steps and down the long walk to the gate. Several times they traversed the distance to the gate and back.

A mocking bird, swinging on a bough overhead, trilled his length of sweetest notes; pausing now and then, to listen for his answer, which came anon, from garden and from hedge. The soft wind was wooing the flowers, and a cricket in the grass was wooing, too. He chirped his love notes shrill and clear; an answering message came in notes as clear as his.

Judge Kahree's blood was leaping through his pulses madly. He paused and turned. Placing a finger under Gwin's chin, he raised her face so that the moon's rays fell full upon it.

"Gwinnie," he murmured, while his inscrutable eyes burned deep into hers, "I have not said a word to you on the subject nearest my heart since that Sabbath morning, two months ago, when you told me I might hope. In the sweet-scented stillness about us tiny voices are calling and receiving

answers. May I have my answer to-night? Will you give me permission as I leave you to carry with me the warm touch of those lips — the sign of your pledge to me?'' He paused.

All was silent, save the twittering voice overhead.

''Gwinnie, I love you! Will you say, Arrel, I love you?''

Gwin's face flushed, and her eyelids quivered under the judge's burning gaze. But somehow she could not utter the words he had suggested. Her intense nature was all aglow with fascination for this handsome, cultured man, in whom her indubitable conception had focused all the perfection which belonged to her ideal.

As she had felt herself drawn to the judge more and more, she was careful to conceal the fact, in order to keep him in doubt until she was sure of herself. But she could not control the language which was speaking in her face now. Judge Kahree read his answer, and his fond dream of months leaped into reality.

''It is well, my darling. Mine, at last, and no mistake;'' he murmured, as his lips met hers.

On arriving at his hotel, too happy to sleep, Judge Kahree sought a moonlit balcony which opened out of his room. For awhile he walked back and forth, letting the south wind cool his flushed face. He looked up into the midnight sky, spangled with myriads of stars, and whispered: —

'' 'Were my life to come one heap of troubles
The pleasure of this moment would suffice
And sweeten all my griefs with its remembrance.'

''Ah, Lee, you knew the taste of this sweet cup when you penned those lines;'' he smiled, as he lit a cigar, sat down, and proceeded to set afloat exquisite castles among blue circling wreaths. His darling's pathway should be strewn with choicest flowers, her every wish anticipated.

After a long time, drowsiness stole over him. He arose, entered his room and retired. He immediately sank into repose, from which he was aroused by a feeling that some one was in his room.

As he peered about him he discovered a shadowy form with bright brown hair and wistful eyes standing near his bedside.

"How did Gwinnie get into my room?" he wondered, "and why did she come?"

She silently glided forward and bent above him, gazing down upon him with the expression of one taking a last look at a coffined face. The agony in her eyes held him inert for awhile. With a mighty effort he broke the spell, sprang up, caught her in his arms, and lo! — his arms were full of empty air. But he heard a voice rise in a plaintive wail and die out in a sob. "God pity you, Arrel, and pity me!"

The vision was so startling and real that Judge Kahree switched on a light, and searched the room, before he could persuade himself that Gwin was not there. He slept little more that night. "It was only a dream," he told his disquieted self.

He arose at daybreak, ordered his horse, and took a canter before breakfast; which shook off his nightmare, and he returned with buoyant spirits.

CHAPTER V

"Oh, had he whispered when his sweetest kiss
Was warm upon my mouth in fancied bliss
He had kissed another woman e'en as this!"

IT WAS an October noonday; misty vapors, in which were blended every tint and color of the rainbow, hung like a gauzy veil, over the sun's bright face. There had been a shower, and light clouds were piling up to westward in great white billows. Rain drops still sparkled on leaf and brier. The green moss underneath was studded with scarlet and gold — thank offerings from the trees to Mother Earth.

Awake, O South-wind, and bring your sweetest offerings from orange grove and spicy forest! Come forth, ye feathered songsters, and sing your tenderest notes; and if you touch the minor strains, they must be pianissimo, for this is Gwin's wedding day. The sacred hour has come. She now stands under hanging garlands, arrayed in soft white folds of clinging silk, bridal veil, and orange flowers. Her hand is clasped by the hand of him she loves, — to whom she is dearer than life. Is anything wanting? Surely this is an ideal wedding, judging externally. Every eye in the great drawing room at Spencer Place was turned admiringly upon the twain now being made one. A finer specimen of handsome manhood than the bridegroom it would be hard to find. Nor could you find one who would take his vows with a more intelligent understanding of their sacred obligations.

Languidly the autumn wind, stealing in at an open window, pushed aside the filmy curtains; rearranged the folds of the bridal veil; kissed the orange wreath; and, lifting its fragrance to the bridegroom, passed on, and distributed its perfume to others. But to the bride, his touch was chill, she shuddered as he passed . . . The minister repeated the words: " 'Until Death You Do Part'."

There was a hush in the room, like the hush of death; into it fell a firm, deep-toned response —

"I will."

The minister's voice trembled in the benedictory prayer. Somehow he felt as if he were officiating over a white casket, where the breath of tuberoses was stiflingly strong. Every guest was impressed with deep solemnity. Tears gathered in the eyes of some and mingled with congratulations. Why? is a psychological mystery. But the vow was taken, — the die was cast, and Gwin Vauce became the wife of Arrel Kahree.

The spirit of gaiety soon took possession of the guests, for luxury and beauty were on every hand, inviting it. There was profusion of flowers and music. Beautiful women and handsome men, moved here and there through the house and grounds. But in the midst of the mellifluous merriment, ever and anon, there came floating to the bride's mental ear, 'Until Death!' The words were wafted to her between the tones of laughter and song, like the tolling of a muffled bell: 'Until Death!' — 'Until Death!' She was very happy. Why should these words haunt her? Another psychological mystery.

A few hours later, Gwin and the judge were bowing and waving adieus to friends from an open barouche, as they

were whirled away toward the station, thence by rail to Kansas City, Mo., their future home.

When the happy pair reached Kansas City, they found the judge's carriage, with its liveried driver and footman, at the station.

Judge Kahree's home was a fine modern structure. The grounds were beautiful and perfectly kept. The house was a three-story white-stone, with plate-glass windows, and wide porches. The interior was exqusite in fresco, fretwork, mosaics, statuary, pictures from the hands of old masters, oriental rugs and handsome furniture.

One evening, three months later, Judge Kahree sat in his great mahogany-panelled library under a chandelier, looking over a daily paper.

Mrs. Kahree reclined upon a couch with a book in her hand. Turning a leaf, her eyes met a page of an unfinished letter in her husband's chirography dated ten years back. It was to one of his college chums, and her eyes met a clause that shocked her.

She arose, went to the judge's side, and placed the sheet upon the table before him.

He glanced over it, changed color, tore it into bits, without comment, and threw it into a waste basket.

Gwin closed her book, returned to the couch, and threw herself back among its cushions. Interlacing her fingers, she placed them over her eyes.

There was a quiver about her mouth which did not escape the judge's eye. He knew that she had caught a glimpse of something in his character which did not belong to her ideal. Only a few words, written in jest; but sometimes tragedies and revolutions are sequences of only a few

words, and now had begun the dispelling of an illusion which meant more to this pair than all the glories of the world.

Judge Kahree arose, drew his chair to the couch where his wife lay; drew her hands from her eyes and held them in both of his.

"You are not taking the foolishness in that letter to heart, Gwinnie?" he ventured. "Boys say all sorts of extravagant things to each other which mean absolutely nothing."

Gwin looked into his eyes a long minute.

"Arrel, you are so handsome, so intelligent, so refined, so dear to me! Yes; I was disposed to take it seriously; but I will not do it. I will forget it; I will believe what you say about it."

His hands still clasped hers. She drew them to her lips and kissed one, then the other.

There was a "whirlwind of emotion" in Judge Kahree's bosom. How obnoxious to him was double dealing! And how distressing to be obliged to deal doubly with one who held possession in the "most sacred foldings of his heart."

He had drifted along and married Gwin without again referring to the question she put to him that Sunday evening at Spencer Place. The thought now filled him with inward quavers. But he determined to make an ideal road to confidence by a life of purity and truth. But his proposition held two quantities for which there was no equation. The sad minor note which life's sweet chord had struck, must continue to wail through the harmony to the bitter end, and his finer self would yet writhe under it as tender flesh writhes under the touch of red hot iron.

Despite the fact that in Gwin's bosom woman's devotion was crying out with passionate protest against releasing her

trust in her husband for an instant; a cold premonitory wave was sweeping her spirit, and she felt like one:

"Who stands in the chill of a winter's twilight
And listens for the return of a vanished form."

Yet she assured herself over and over that he was noble and true. The love she had given him — while not entirely spontaneous — was not half-hearted.

Glancing up now, Gwin was startled at something she met in Judge Kahree's face.

"Arrel, what is it? are you ill? You are pale."

"Oh, no!" he answered lightly. "The room seems a little close, however."

Rising, he turned to a window, threw aside the curtain and raised the sash. He stood there awhile — looking out.

At last Gwin rose, passed into the music-room, and seated herself at the piano. Her fingers swept the keys a few times. Then she sang "Love's Old Sweet Song."

As she was singing the last verse, the judge came and stood beside her.

When she left the instrument, he turned into the hall, took his hat and went out. He was gone an hour, had walked continuously, and had not left his own grounds — back and forth, back and forth, trying to still the the tumult within.

The splendor of autumn vanished into a mild winter which abounded with social functions, interspersed with theater-parties, lectures and grand opera. The judge and his wife had been kept in quite a whirl ever since their marriage. They had enjoyed the winter immensely. They went to Europe in January and had just returned. A June

evening found their home brilliant with electric lights, flowers and guests.

The judge had a headache — the air indoors oppressed him. He stepped through a french window and walked along a gallery to where a breeze was blowing. He paused near an open window. Just inside, two gentleman stood conversing.

"I wonder how the judge disposed of the fair Joan when he married?" queried one.

"Weaned her with a gift of five thousand dollars. She's a complete wreck. Ten years ago she moved in the best circles."

"Yes; but Kahree had nothing to do with her downfall; I happen to know something about that. She caused his moral collapse. When he and Joan met first, he was twenty, she sixteen and wise as Satan. She set a trap for him and he stumbled into it."

The judge turned and left the spot. As he reached the french window and was about to pass into the house, a lady's skirts brushed his feet, and his wife swept in in front of him. She neither spoke nor glanced toward him. A deep flush was upon her cheeks, and her lips were pressed together firmly. Soon she was the center of a merry group. The judge's eyes followed her with a feeling of uneasiness. He saw that she was not herself now. She was usually quiet and entertained without apparent effort. But it was evident to him that she now was taxing her energy. Her mood was brilliant, and frequently a laugh rippled from her lips. Not another time during the evening did she glance toward the judge. When he managed to get near her, she moved away and disappeard among the guests. Finally they stood side by side bidding adieu to their friends. When the last one

had departed, Gwin turned and placed a hand upon each of the judge's shoulders:

"Arrel! my Arrel!" she panted, "tell me that the cruel story I overheard to-night is untrue! Tell me you know no Joan — never knew one. Oh, tell me this — I implore!"

Judge Kahree's face took on a marble hue; but he did not reply.

"O heaven! he is silent!" she cried, as she sank to a chair. "God pity you, Arrel, and pity me! I thought I had married Arthur, and lo! it is Launcelot!"

As the peculiar wail, "God pity you, Arrel, and pity me!" fell upon his ear, the judge remembered his dream. The same expression of hopeless agony was in her face now that he saw there in his dream.

"Oh! can it be? Is this my idol that lies crushed in the debris at my feet?"

Gwin bent herself together and moaned despairingly.

"Gwinnie, hear me!" pleaded the judge, taking a step toward her.

"Don't! oh, don't!" she interrupted, springing to her feet, and putting out a hand restrainingly. "Let's never speak of this again."

She hurriedly climbed the stairs, and went to her room.

This event marked an epoch in the lives of this pair. Never again could they be to each other what they had been.

Gwin continued to show her husband the utmost respect, and after that night, she never alluded to the matter. But while there were neither sighs nor tears, a "pathetic resignation" was stamped upon her face. Otherwise, she "triumphed outwardly," and no one ever suspected that anything was wrong. But Judge Kahree knew that it was

seldom out of her mind. Only during sleep and periods of extreme business pressure was it out of his. His suffering was no less than hers. The knowledge that he had lost the confidence of the heart in whose affection every fiber of his being seemed rooted and grounded brought sorrow too deep for words. If his life henceforth were to yield any "splendor of coloring, or subtility of perfume," she must furnish the inspiration.

That he still was a man among men, honored, trusted and deferred to, was small consolation. To lose Gwin (and he already had lost his best hold) would be to cut loose from hope, and despair would settle over him like a pall. A fear haunted him that, in spite of all he could do, she might slip away from him entirely. The thought that he might yet be obliged to stand passive and watch his idol drift out of his reach was almost maddening.

It was near midnight two days after the Kahree reception. The house was quiet, the servants all asleep. The judge sat in the library alone. Above, in her room, with the light switched off, Gwin had been sitting for hours before an open window, gazing out. The light of a full moon flooded the room, making her look ghostly in her white cashmere dressing-gown. The clock upon the mantle aroused her from her lethe when it briskly chimed twelve. She arose and began to make preparations to retire. But she soon sat down again, forgetting her preparations. After a few minutes she sprang to her feet.

"This will never do; I must bring my will to bear upon myself. My idol is gone, — crumbled to dust!"

As if the first realization of it had just burst upon her, she threw up both hands, then sank to her knees by the window. Folding her arms over the sill, her face fell for-

ward upon them. She had suffered so intensely in the last few hours that she was almost prostrated. Things about her began to seem unreal. After several minutes of silence she moaned:—

"Can I endure it? — Oh, can I?"

"Until death!". . . .

The mystic answer — voiceless though it was — struck her mental ear with heart-piercing poignancy. For it reminded her of her solemn obligation to him who, if not the embodiment of that which she held most sacred, was her wedded husband.

Ah, Gwin, sorrow's pruning-knife will not spare you, for thus can your life be made to "blossom and send forth beauty into waste places."

The door of Gwin's room was pushed softly open, and Judge Kahree stood upon the threshold. He contemplated the kneeling figure by the window silently a few seconds. Then he crossed the room to his wife's side, lifted her to her feet, led her to a chair, and, sitting down, drew her to his lap.

"O Gwinnie!" he exclaimed, and the anguish of a big heart was unmistakably breathed forth. "If you could know! — if I could make you understand! — if I but could! For, in the sight of God, there are extenuating circumstances. But you, Gwinnie, do not know, have never suspected the libidinous state of social codes, and their network of temptation. . . . As for deceiving you,—it was not premeditated. I intended to confess. But I permitted procrastination to lead me on until my overmastering love weakened my will."

"O Arrel, how I pity you!"

She lifted her face, and he caught it between his hands and kissed her lips.

"But, dear heart," she added, "do you realize that we have crossed a line over which it is impossible to return?"

"Yes;" he admitted, with sinking heart. Not that the thought had not occurred to him previously. But to hear her suggest it was torture.

Through all this terrible ordeal, Gwin's love for the judge had not waned. But it had transformed itself. It was maternal now. (Do not smile, reader.) This is the natural trend of woman's love. The golden wedding invariably finds the affection of the aged wife for her husband so transfused with mother love that she can distinguish little or no difference between it and that for her sons. Time, mellifluently and all unconsciously to her, has carried her affection into its natural channel. While in the incipiency of the marital relation, a disappointment — a shock — and the glamour of romance and passion steals away, like a rosy flush from an evening sky. But, unlike the flush on the sky, the to-morrow which may restore it never comes. But, happily, sweet mother love may take its place.

The lives of this pair glided along in this groove two years. Their home was a popular resort for the refined and intellectual. It was universally believed to be a model home. For the judge and his wife — both in public and in private — showed each other the utmost deference.

CHAPTER VI

"O Brackenbury! I have done these things
That now give evidence against my soul."

JUDGE KAHREE was a puzzle to his wife in one respect. He was determined that their home should be a childless one. He usually was willing to concede almost any point, to please her — especially one that compromised her conscience, as this did. When the subject was alluded to, he showed intensity of feeling, and at last refused to discuss it. He was totally unlike himself in this; he assigned no reason, except that he preferred not to have children around him. To add to the mystery, Gwin saw that he was fond of children.

Although the sun had crossed the equinox, winter's icy fingers still clutched the streams as if reluctant to relinquish the rigorous rule he had held five long months. Nature's face wore a dark frown, for her spring-child was a squalling brat that caterwauled day and night, and disgraced her pretty name. Cold mists hung over Kansas City, and the violets and crocuses in the flower-seller's baskets looked pathetic.

On a rayless night, after a bleak, uproarious day, Judge and Mrs. Kahree sat before a bright fire in their library.

The judge proceeded to cut the leaves of a new "Scientific Monthly."

Gwin had not been well for several weeks, and somehow the sound of the soughing wind depressed her, and a sense

of approaching sorrow stole over her. She sat gazing into the glowing coals in the open fireplace where hickory logs had crumbled and fallen between the great brass andirons in a mass of immense golden nuggets, among which gleamed cities, fair as jewels and gold could make them. At last she turned to the judge.

"Arrel, I have something to tell you."

Judge Kahree looked up and met a flushed face and downcast eyes.

"Well," he answered, after waiting a minute for her to resume.

But she remained silent and did not look at him.

"Well," he repeated, "what is it?"

She gave him a stealthy glance.

"I'm afraid to tell you?"

"Afraid? — Of what?"

"Your anger."

"Did you ever see me angry, dear?"

"Never."

"Gwinnie, are you sure you are in a perfectly sane condition?"

She was smiling now.

He bent toward her and took her hand.

"Let me feel your pulse."

He lifted the hand to his lips.

"So you are afraid of me? How long since you began to feel symptoms of this terror?"

There was something comical in his face and his ironical tone, and Gwin laughed merrily.

Judge Kahree's countenance lit up. He had not heard her laugh like that for many months.

"You pique my curiosity," he told her. "What is this terrible thing you have to relate?"

He drew her to him, and seated her upon his lap.

"Now, Gwinnie, what is it?"

"Seriously, I'm afraid to tell you. I know how you feel about it, and I am sure it will disappoint and displease you. Yet the prospect is so sweet to me. O Arrel, if you could feel differently; I can not understand it."

"The longer you talk, the more I suspect there is something wrong up here," smiled the judge, tapping her forehead with the magazine. "I haven't the remotest idea to what you are referring."

She whispered something which made him look serious, but he said nothing.

"How well he bears it!" she thought. "I'm so glad."

She arose and returned to her easy chair.

The judge opened the magazine again, but, instead of reading, he sat looking into the fire.

At last he tossed the book to a table, arose, went to a window, and, drawing the curtain aside, looked out.

"I think I must see Dr. Ardery to-night, Gwinnie. I have a pressing matter of business with him which had slipped my mind. It will not require long to transact it. But I must attend to it at once."

"Will not to-morrow do? The storm sounds so fierce."

"It isn't as bad as it sounds. I might not be able to see him to-morrow."

"It's so dark," she insisted.

"The street lights are burning."

"But listen! it's raining."

"A mere sprinkle. I haven't far to go, you know, and I'll not be out long."

The judge kissed his wife, and turned into the hall.

As he was putting on his ulster and rubbers, Harry Spencer, who was reading law with him now, came downstairs.

"Why, Judge, you're not going out?"

"Yes, a little while. It's rather an inclement evening, isn't it? I think I can make it, however."

The judge took his hat and umbrella, and as a howling blast swept into the hall, he passed out.

The wind came in gusts. The rain felt as if it would soon turn to sleet. It was all the judge could do to keep his umbrella from turning wrong side out.

He seemed to be the only pedestrian abroad, except a dripping cur, which was hurrying to its kennel. A pair of mounted policemen could be seen in the distance, and a cab passed him; with these exceptions, the street seemed quite deserted.

After a detour of a few blocks, Judge Kahree ascended the steps to a two story brick residence and rang the bell. It was answered by a colored boy.

"Good evening, Bob. Is the doctor in?"

"Yas, suh, he upstai's."

"Is he alone?"

"Fus doo' to de lef', suh. Yas, suh, he alone."

Judge Kahree entered the hall; placed his dripping umbrella in the rack; hung up his wet hat and ulster; and, after Bob had removed his rubbers for him, he put some silver in the boy's hand; mounted the stairs, and knocked at the first door to the left.

It was opened by a tall, faultlessly attired man, with a brown Van Dyke beard, very smooth, fair skin, and delicate hands.

"Why, hello, Judge," he cried, clasping Judge Kahree's hand. "Are you abroad this stormy night? Come in, I'm glad to see you."

Judge Kahree passed into the room, and the doctor closed the door.

CHAPTER VII

TIME evolved midwinter and found Mrs. Kahree busy embroidering delicate patterns upon white materials of finest texture. Frequently she sang as she wrought, for she was dreaming of her prospective joy.

A day came when Dr. Ardery was summoned to attend Mrs. Kahree. He remained with her many hours, and his face took on an expression of deep concern.

The judge looked ghastly. He paced the floor incessantly, and dark circles were about his eyes.

"Heavens, Ardery! how is this going to end? don't let her die!"

"Judge, I will do my utmost; God knows what the result will be, but whatever it is, you must be brave and bear it."

"Be brave and bear it? Great God! I couldn't bear seeing her die in this way. It will bear me to a mad-house."

The judge went to the bedside, and bent over his wife, who was unconscious.

"Save her, Ardery! O save her! and take every dollar I possess!"

"You had better call on a Higher Power, for, to tell you the truth, I have about exhausted my skill."

Gwin had a strong constitution. The crisis passed, she regained consciousness, opened her eyes and looked into the eyes of her husband. Then she pressed a kiss upon the warm lips of her newborn son who ceased to breathe in an hour.

For many days Mrs. Kahree hovered between life and

death. The judge hung over her like a fond mother over a sick babe, and was untiring in his attentions. Watching him through her half-closed eyes, as he came to her bedside so often and bent above her with such tender solicitude, her heart received a new baptism of pity.

"He has been sinned against as well as sinning," she told herself. "I have forgiven him but I must try to forget and take him back into my confidence. For such devotion would touch a heart of stone. Poor Arrel! how he has suffered! his face shows it. He has repented of his sins, in sack-cloth and ashes; I feel that I can trust him now; and when I remember my own sins — my temper, how I fought it, and how it overcame me again and again, it helps me to have more charity for other people's weaknesses."

Woman-like, Gwin was trying to cover the sins of him she loved with her own shortcomings.

The next time Judge Kahree bent over his wife she put both arms about his neck, drew him down and kissed him.

"Arrel dear, the past shall be buried now; we will begin anew. I love you, Arrel dear. From henceforth, I will trust you, for I believe you are worthy."

The emotions which passed through Judge Kahree's mind in the subsequent few minutes are indescribable. But as the sweet cup pressed his lips the taste of gall was in it and its dregs were at the bottom.

"I deserve it all, Gwinnie; I have but one excuse to offer — this overmastering love. But, O my darling! If you can but trust me again — if you can!"

Who does not pity this man whose great tender heart is thus environed by transverse forces — now too strong for his control! The Nemesis is pursuing him, step by step, and as surely as the relentless bloodhound tracking his victim to

the jungle, runs him down at last, so surely will Nemesis overtake the judge and require his heart's blood. While the "unreasoning credence" we call hope was in his bosom, that "authoritative oracle" — conscience — was there also.

But let us have a care, reader, as to how we judge this man. He and his wife are victims of social codes which we have helped to establish by condoning vice. When the law of compensation overtakes us with misery and disgrace to our dear ones — which it surely will — let us not cry out with uplifted hands: "What have I done that God should visit this upon me and mine!"

. . . . . .

Another month went by. The green earth was sending up sweet incense. The streams had burst their icy fetters, and leaped with delight as they joined freedom's song with bird and bee.

Gwin sat in her room, watching the sunlight steal in at the windows and creep over the lilies-of-the-valley and the moss-roses at her feet, lending brilliance to her delicately tinted rugs.

The little clock upon the mantel struck five.

The judge appeared almost immediately. He greeted his wife affectionately, and, sitting down, had conversed a few minutes, when the doorbell rang. He arose and excused himself.

"That's Ardery. I brought him out to dinner; but he stopped a block away, to see a patient. His wife and daughter started for Europe to-day, — he looks pathetic, poor fellow!"

The judge withdrew.

Gwin glanced at the clock — a quarter past five.

"I feel so well this evening I have a mind to dress and

go down to dinner: It will be a nice surprise for Arrel and Harry — and the doctor, too.''

She arose, crossed the room to a mirror, and drew the pins from her hair. Then she rang for a maid, who soon appeared and assisted her to dress and descend the stairs, declaring as she did so:

''Ah ma'am! indade you are a mere shadow of your swate silf. Three wakes ago I niver thought to be iver hilpin yez down the stars iny more. Sure an' fate furrust I ixpicted to see yez comin' down; the judge followin' th' while, all decorated 'ith crape. It was a sorrowin' time we had here for awhile: Mr. Harry pacin' the flure in the lib'ry, and the judge pacin' the flure in the hall above. Naither of 'em atein' sufficient to kape a mouse alive, a'tall. It's mesilf was sorry for 'em, the darlints!'' and Mrs. Conner left the ''swate shadow'' standing behind her chair at the head of the table in the dining-room, and the butler announced dinner.

The gentlemen were quite surprised to see Gwin downstairs. Harry sprang forward and caught her hand.

''Why, Sister, I am delighted!''

''Thank you, my good brother, I am delighted, too. I know now how to appreciate freedom after prison life.''

Doctor Ardery and Mrs. Kahree exchanged warm greetings.

The judge silently passed to her side, put an arm about her, drew her to him and held her close for a moment. Little did he think that this was the last time he was ever to embrace his wife. Never this side the mystic river were his fond lips to touch hers again.

That dinner was one long to be remembered by two of the party. They lingered with sparkling colloquy over the

dessert and coffee, and the doctor forgot his lonesomeness awhile.

Finally, the judge said anxiously:

"Mrs. Kahree, I fear you are overtaxing your strength. Shall we adjourn to the library — where you may have an easy chair?"

All arose, and soon were ensconced in the library.

Harry begged to be excused.

"I'm sorry to leave such delightful company," he said, comparing his watch with the clock, "but I have an engagement for eight o'clock. I have loitered too long already."

So he hurriedly bid them good night, and went out.

"Judge, let's take a short walk and a smoke before we settle down for the evening," suggested the doctor. "That is, if Mrs. Kahree will excuse us."

"I was about to propose that we repair to my den for a smoke," replied the judge.

"No;" objected the doctor, "I prefer the open air, after dinner. But Mrs. Kahree hasn't given us her permission."

"If your smoking depends upon my permission, I will forever withhold it," she laughed, with the old roguish expression in her eyes.

"Not to smoke, to go," amended the doctor. "But I can't believe that you would be so cruel, in view of the fact that men's appetites are a bequest from our mother Eve."

"That everlasting apple again! You are obviously a true son of Adam, Doctor Ardery."

The two men smilingly bowed themselves out.

A feeling of depression settled over Mrs. Kahree at once. She felt as she had the last evening she spent in this room. Was it presentiment — the shadow of approaching calamity? or was it owing to physical debility together with the memory

of that "half-tasted evanescent joy," which so often struck her heart with a pang? The future seemed to loom up before her like a stone wall. She felt faint and weary. She rose, and, going into an adjoining room, threw herself upon a couch and was soon asleep.

Before long her slumbers were broken by a murmur of voices in the library. The door stood ajar. Although the conversation was in an undertone, every word struck her ear distinctly. For awhile she listened in a half-somnolent state. She recognized the voice of Doctor Ardery as the first speaker: His remarks, though brief, were clearly enlightening. He finished with . . . . "That baby of yours was a splendidly developed child. But, Judge, he was blind."

"Great God!" The voice that answered was hoarse and unnatural.

Gwin was wide awake now. She raised herself to her elbow, gasped, and, for the first time in her life, fell back fainting.

When she recovered consciousness, all was silent in the library. But she heard the doctor and the judge bidding each other good night in the hall. Clasping her hands over her heart, which felt as if it were breaking, her pallid lips breathed:

"O God, let me die!"

Then she lay tense to the point of madness.

The seeming paradox in her husband's aversion to her bearing children, while his passionate love of them was unmistakably ostensible, was clear now. She also understood the object of his visit to Doctor Ardery's office that bleak night after she had disclosed her secret to him.

Judge Kahree and Doctor Ardery, having returned from their walk, and finding Mrs. Kahree not in the library, had

taken it for granted that fatigue had sent her to her room for the night. On going there, after the doctor's departure, and not finding her, the judge hastened back downstairs in search of her. At first glimpse of her he started back, for she looked like a corpse. Then he sprang forward and bent to raise her up. She opened her eyes and waved him back.

"Don't touch me, please!"

"Darling, you are very ill."

"Oh, no; I am dead!" she gasped. "I have lost all! — Let the curtain fall! — The play is over!"

She paused, panting for breath.

"A little more than two years ago," she resumed, "I stood before the altar and vowed to love, honor and obey you until death should separate us. This night I heard your lips confess to that which has made it impossible for me longer to render obedience to your wishes.

"Gwinnie, you do not mean — you can not mean that you are about to abandon me? Tell me any thing but this! — any thing but that you have ceased to love me! A felon's cell is nothing compared with losing you. I would rather go to Hell with you than to Heaven without you!"

"What can I do, Arrel? You have rendered me powerless by placing an impassable gulf between us and you have crushed confidence from my heart. I can no more pick up and replace the broken petals of my affection than I could restore in freshness and fragrance upon yonder bush a rose your heel had crushed. The sweet dream is over. We now must face bleak realities which once seemed impossible to us. From this hour — oh, can it be? — can it be? — from this hour our paths diverge!"

Again Gwin gasped and lost consciousness. The ordeal was terrible to her in her weakened condition.

She revived almost immediately and sat up. As soon as she felt able to walk, she arose to leave the room.

"You are not strong enough to go alone; let me assist you," and the judge, took a step toward her.

Again she waved him back.

"Do not touch me, I beg of you!"

"Then promise me, before you go, that you will remain under this roof."

"If you wish me to continue to be your wife in the eyes of the world, for your sake, I will do it. But your marital obligation to me here and now is annulled. All is over between us; all that rendered the marriage relation sweet and sacred is gone. But I will be true to my vow, and if you will feel better satisfied to have me in your home, I will remain and play the farce of being your wife!"

The judge stood there looking like a marble statue of himself. The proposition staggered him.

"Nothing remains to us then — but — but memory!" His voice was faint with suppressed emotion.

"That is all. Arrel."

After steadying herself a few seconds, Mrs. Kahree turned to leave the room. As she passed the judge she caught his hand between both of hers.

"God shield thee, helpless one! . . . . Good night," she breathed, with a gush of tears.

He attempted to catch her in his arms; but she slipped from his grasp, leaving in his hands a light shawl, which had been about her shoulders. She paused at the door and looked back.

"If I am to remain under this roof, Arrel, you must not attempt to take me in your arms again. You and I are friends now, nothing more."

The judge stood gazing after his wife in silence a few moments. Then he sat down before the fire, and sat there until the last coal had turned to ashes on the hearth. His anguish was sufficiently keen to drive a weaker man to suicide. but no such thought entered his mind. Like Gwin, he meant to endure bravely to the end.

The night wore on while an array of moving pictures passed before Judge Kahree's mental vision. Some filled him with shame and remorse. But those in which Gwin figured, breathed to his spirit a mystic language, sweet and tender.

He recalled that fair night at Spencer Place, when a crescent of silver hung low in the western sky, and the mocking bird trilled his love song, and the cricket chirped his. When the tender light, the suggestive stillness, and the enamoring presence beside him, had set his pulses to leaping, and he had held her face up to the moon's rays, and in the quivering lips and fluttering sigh, read that which glorified Earth to him and made of it a paradise.

He recalled, also, the dream of the same never-to-be-forgotten night when he sought to clasp in his arms the woman he loved — and found only empty air.

"O God!" he whispered, turning his face upward. "Can it be that all is over, and I must drag out an existence without her?"

Beads stood upon his forehead, and his great heart seemed to be breaking. He rose and paced the floor until the gray dawn began to steal into the room; then, exhausted, he fell upon a couch and sank into heavy slumber from which he was aroused by a call to breakfast. He opened his eyes and looked about him and his great sorrow met and fell over him like a pall.

Gwin had been obliged to resort to a sedative. There

would have been no sleep for her without it. In her weakened condition and present high state of nervous tension, she knew that a sleepless night might prove a dangerous experiment.

She rested well, and the sunlight falling across her face, awoke her. But a load seemed to rest upon her heart, — what was it? — what had happened?

It was several seconds before she could collect her scattered senses sufficiently to recall the events of the preceding evening. Suddenly all rushed over her with a stifling sensation. She sprang to a sitting posture, and put her fingers to her temples. Then, quivering and throbbing with pain, she lay back upon the pillow, and closed her eyes despairingly.

Her mind went longingly backward to the days of love and trust when it seemed that her life's pathway had broadened to an avenue leading through gardens of beauty. But the avenue had narrowed to a weed-tangled path, where, before an insurmountable barrier, lay a little heap of ashes, — all that was left of her radiant hopes.

That early morning struggle was terrible. The man she loved had been stripped of the fine garments with which her imagination had clothed him. But the bond which held her to him had not fallen away — he was her husband still. Death recently refused to claim her, after beckoning her. There was nothing to live for; but she must live. However, her mind was too chaotic now to put things logically to itself. It was as if she had just awakened from a nightmare and the numbness was still clutching her.

On attempting to rise, she found herself very weak. But, being gifted with strong determination, she got up, took a cold plunge in her bathtub, and was so invigorated that she was able to dress herself with her usual pains, and descend to breakfast.

When Judge Kahree entered the dining room, he found his wife standing before an open window, drinking long respirations of ozone, while Harry read to her from a morning paper.

It was one of those invigorating spring mornings which seem to give one a new lease on life. The windows were all open, a breath of sweet leafmold was in the room, and in the trees without was a choir of chirruping songsters.

When Gwin heard Judge Kahree's step, she turned with a bow and a smile, and took her accustomed place at the table.

She was determined not to let Harry see that any thing was wrong. He should never know from her that the judge had a fault. No one should know.

The most sacred of all vows is that of marriage. Here was a woman who realized this; who felt that to recite to another the faults of him she had vowed at the nuptial altar to honor, until death, would mean desecration of that which is holy.

As her eyes met the handsome dark orbs of her husband, which were full of tenderest regard, a pang shot through her bosom which, to her surprise, assured her that love still lived and breathed there.

Language is too tame to portray the emotions of this petted man of the world, who, hitherto, had been accustomed to having things come his way, who now felt impoverished, utterly ruined in all that would tend to make life sweet. Master of more thousands than he knew how to spend, yet unable to purchase the one thing needful to his happiness — the confidence of the woman sitting opposite him. He would willingly give up every dollar he possessed, go forth homeless, and feel that he was rich, if her trust in him could be restored.

Gwin poured the coffee, and made a mighty effort to

appear natural in Harry's presence. Excitement had brought a tinge of pink to her cheeks which he observed, and he told her how well she was looking — that she had improved since last evening. But the judge understood; his heart ached for her. He envied the bunch of sweet violets which nestled under her chin, and he wished for one, because it had touched the flesh that was so dear to him.

Unsuspecting Harry was in a jolly mood. He had a letter from his father, which he read aloud with one enclosed to Gwin from Zoe which she read aloud. Harry had some pleasant down-town news to relate, with an amusing incident, and the breakfast hour passed without anything unusual becoming apparent.

This pair drifted along side by side — each heart bearing its anguish silently — each full of sympathy for the other. They entertained together, attended social functions and church together; spent evenings at home alone together; read and sang to each other; and through it all, the terrible thing which had made and was widening the gulf between them never was alluded to.

CHAPTER VIII

SEVEN years had flown since the October noonday which had lent its jewels to the nuptial celebration of Gwin Vauce and Judge A. J. Kahree. Their anniversary dawned clear, with a hint of crispness in the air. A thin curtain of smoke was draped low on the eastern horizon which painted the sun's face a deep crimson as he rose over Kansas City; and thousands of windows and spires responded with blazing splendor, as if a mighty army had risen, to greet an approaching monarch with his own colors.

Harry Spencer had gone back to Georgia, and was practicing law in the city of A ——.

The judge and Gwin were alone. As they sat down to breakfast their thoughts were similar. Both remembered the date, and with sad hearts recalled their transient felicity. After the exchange of a few commonplace remarks they ate in silence. Twice during the meal their eyes met; each met an expression that reacted in tender sympathy for the other.

With passing years, the maternal love in Gwin's starving motherheart had strengthened; she gave Judge Kahree all the devoted solicitude she would have bestowed upon her children. She was as careful of him as if he were a baby. In her heart of hearts he was her erring son. But she did not suspect it, nor did he. In her bosom, was that tender mother pity which kept her striving to make up to him, as far as possible, for the suffering brought upon him by his misdeeds.

He realized that she still loved him. But her supererogation on the one hand, and her cold aloofness on the other

hand acted as a sort of jostle to his mental equipoise; it was beginning to tell on his nerves, too, and hope of a closer relationship was now over.

After breakfast, Gwin went to the library; the judge followed her.

She was standing before the grate.

He went to her side and would have placed an arm about her but she took a step away.

"You will not permit one embrace?" he said sadly.

"Why, Arrel!"

"I know," he replied apologetically. "But I came here to have a talk with you, Gwinnie, — a last one, perhaps. I have decided to go away. It grieves me to go, and I think my going will grieve you. For I realize that you have loved me through all."

Gwin gulped and could not speak at once. "Oh, yes; Arrel;" her voice was unsteady, "if I had loved you less, I should have sorrowed less."

There was deep emotion in Judge Kahree's face. He was standing beside a bookcase — with an arm resting upon it.

After several seconds he spoke in a level voice.

"I have been deliberating a long time upon this step. I have decided that separation will be better for both of us. Together, there is no surcease from pain. Separated, our wounds will not be chafed, at least. It is my great love for you that is driving me away from you, I simply can not endure this sort of life any longer. It has required all the strength I was master of to reach this decision. But for years you have been enduring a sort of slavery. I shall set you free, now."

"No! No! Arrel," she cried out. "I haven't felt it so, at all! You are not thinking of a divorce?"

"Not unless you wish one. But in three days I shall start for a tour of the old world, hoping thus to be able to blot from my heart the only image ever enshrined there."

She did not speak, she felt that she could not articulate.

"There will be a bank account here at your disposal. I wish you to remain in the home, retain the servants and strive to forget the past."

But Gwin already had decided upon the course she would pursue, if he left her.

"Do not think that I look upon our marriage as a failure, Gwinnie! It has been hard on you — but I am a better man for having met and loved you. I shall carry always a great sorrow in my heart. But I shall carry memories, also, which will help me to resist temptation."

"O Arrel!" she cried out, and her face was full of suffering, "don't leave me! don't! I shall be so lonely without you!"

She caught his hand in both of hers and held it close.

"Don't call it slavery that I stay in your home and do what I can conscientiously, to make life endurable to you. It gives me pleasure — indeed it does! Don't leave your home! Oh, don't!"

The judge's agitation was so great that he could endure no more of this. He gently drew his hand from her clasp and hurried from the room and the house, wiping tears as he went.

When Gwin heard the street door close behind him, she realized that her life with Judge Kahree was forever at an end. She threw herself upon a couch with a feeling of abject desolation. It was as if he now lay dead before her.

She closed her eyes, to see if she could remember his features perfectly. Yes; and his dear eyes were full of the old tenderness. A piteous moan escaped her lips.

"Arrel! Arrel! I shall never look into your dear face again! never! oh, never!"

For a while she lay still and almost as white as she was that night when she overheard his confession. But anon her calmer judgment came to the rescue, and while the thought of separation and a broken home was excruciating, her mind adduced reasons in favor of it which she was forced to admit.

She never before realized fully what the life of the last seven years had meant to Judge Kahree. Proud spirited as he was, and passionately in love with her, how complete was his humiliation and how intense must have been his suffering! She had thought that she knew just how to pity him.

"But oh, I didn't! I couldn't realize it. Poor Arrel! Poor Arrel!"

She rose to leave the room.

"Good bye, beautiful home, I must leave you!"

At the door she paused, looked back, and tears rushed to her eyes.

After a minute, she passed into the music room. Going to the piano, she lay a hand lovingly upon it — as if it were a living thing.

"Farewell," she whispered hoarsely — "never again!"

Gwin felt very much as one would feel who is conscious of having reached his last day in this life. She passed on from room to room, recalling memories — some sweet, some sad.

When she reached the drawing-room, she turned to a window and stood awhile gazing out. Great trees, while reaching out strong arms protectingly to the house, to ward

off rough winds, swayed and touched the roof softly — as if to caress it. Yellow leaves were drifting slowly down to the green sward, while rich autumn flowers, effulgent with golden sunshine, variegated the wide lawn.

"Farewell, dear home!" breathed the desolate young wife, "a long farewell! Tenderly have you sheltered me, while I dreamed life's sweetest dream, learned its saddest lesson, and died its bitterest death. O heart of mine, are you breaking? Shall you ever feel another throb of joy? ever again beat responsive to child's laugh or bird's song?"

Finally Gwin turned, and her eyes wandered about the beautiful room. On every hand were handsome gifts from him whose love had never waned. Here was a costly picture; there, a work of art in statuary; upon the mantel, a vase worth its weight in gold. Upstairs, in her jewel case, there gleamed and flashed a fortune. But what was all this, under the circumstances! It is true, it spoke of an indulgent husband's love. But this only helped to break her heart. If he had been cold and neglectful, the task before her would not have been so hard.

At last Gwin reached her own room. As she entered, a pair of handsome pleading eyes met hers from a portrait upon the wall.

"Arrel!" she gasped "Oh, I can not go! — I can not give you up! — You must not leave me! No, no, I will not let you go! I will plead with you to stay — plead on my knees!"

She sat down a few minutes, flushed and irresolute.

Presently, her lips set themselves together firmly, and she rose to her feet.

Avoiding another glance at the picture, she drew a trunk from a closet, opened it, and, selecting her plainest

articles of clothing from her wardrobe and the drawers of her dressing-case, she packed them in the trunk, then she locked and strapped it.

Putting some toilet articles into a small satchel, she changed her dress for a brown serge, after which she knelt and asked God's protecting care over him she was about to leave forever, and over herself.

Rising from her knees, she took a purse from a drawer and counted the contents.

Then she rang for Mrs. Conner, who came at once.

"Tell Jones I wish a trunk taken to the Union Station as soon as possible, and tell him to have the carriage ready for me at eleven o'clock!"

The maid glanced back curiously as she turned, after receiving the order. She saw that Mrs. Kahree had been weeping. She never before had seen traces of tears upon Gwin's face.

"I wonder phwat is ailin' the darlint? Sure an' she's been gittin' bad news!"

Gwin closed the door. Then she sat down at an escritoire and penned the following:

"Dear Arrel:

"Did you think that I could remain sheltered in your home while you were driven into foreign lands, to escape me? But this is like you — so unselfish — so generous!

"Good bye, dearheart. When you read this, I shall be miles away.

"Keep the home yourself, and do not brood, dear. Let us strive to be happy, and not permit the past to rob us of our peace.

"God bless and keep you! is the prayer of your desolate Gwin."

Gwin's face was very white when she finished that brief letter. She sealed and addressed it. Then she sat for awhile with her elbows resting upon the escritoire, her face in her hands, and her heart sinking with sickening fear of what was before her. This change that had come into her life was so sudden — so terrible! she could not realize it.

She sat thus until Jones came up for her trunk. Then she rose and put on a brown hat and veil.

As she heard the clatter of hoofs coming up the paved driveway, she drew on her gloves, picked up the letter and the satchel, and went downstairs.

The housekeeper was in the hall.

"I am unexpectedly called away," and Gwin placed the letter upon a table. "This will explain to the judge. Give it to him when he comes to dinner.

"Good bye, Mrs. Conner."

Without a glance backward, Gwin went out and entered the carriage; the footman closed the door, and climbed to the box; Jones turned the horses heads; they were off with a bound, and the beautiful Kahree home was left desolate.

When Judge Kahree came home at six o'clock, Mrs. Conner met him in the hall with Mrs. Kahree's letter. His heart sank as he recognized the handwriting, for a premonition of what was coming struck him. He went to the library and closed the door before breaking the seal. When dinner was announced, the judge went to the dining-room, and drank a cup of coffee. But the dinner was carried away almost untouched, and morning's gray dawn found him in the library, where he had remained all night.

A week later, strangers had possession of the Kahree home, and the newspapers stated that Judge Kahree and his wife had gone to Europe for a tour of many months.

When Gwin reached the R. R. Station, she purchased a ticket to St. Louis, and had her baggage checked.

She was soon seated in a car, which was moving rapidly eastward. Dazed and heart-sick, she sat gazing out at a window, seeing nothing. In her ears was the roar and rattle of the running train. But her mind took no cognition of it. Her face was white and set, and her eyes seemed to be looking far away. "What is the end to be?" she asked herself. If for a moment she glanced longingly backward, duty whispered, "Remember Lot's wife." Ahead, all was inky darkness.

"Tickets!" demanded the conductor.

Gwin did not hear.

He paused beside her.

"Madam, your ticket, please!"

Still she was unheeding.

He touched her upon the shoulder.

She turned with a start, and the color suffused her face.

As she gave him her ticket and was turning again to the window she met the gaze of a pair of dark eyes in a seat across the aisle. The man was of exceptionally fine appearance, and for a moment her attention was attracted to his portly physique, broad intellectual forehead, dark thick hair, and refined features.

Strange beings are we, that during the most intense mental or physical strain will note minute details with as much acuteness as in our periods of happy restfulness. We will observe the smallest insect that may pass before our vision and note any peculiarity it may possess. The

drowning man will see the little fly that buzzes about his head, or a tiny spider swimming on the water.

Gwin gave the gentleman opposite her a mere passing thought: "A man above the ordinary." and, turning, resumed her restrospective and prospective musing, where the conductor had interrupted it. She lived it all over again — the sweetness, the anguish, and she endeavored to lay some plans for the future. For hours she sat scarcely moving a muscle, or changing her position, her elbow upon the window sill, her chin resting upon her hand, and her eyes looking straight before her.

Perhaps it was the great sorrow in her young face that first drew the attention of the man across the aisle. Her face possessed a rare charm for him. What would he not give to know her history. She took so little cognizance of things about her that he could study her at will without attracting her attention.

The gentleman we are now introducing has figured conspicuously in the highest political and social circles in the world. As the "late lamented" has not yet been connected with his name, these pages will know him as Honorable Edgar Grannell, recently returned from a two years absence as embassador to a foreign country. Lawyer and politician though he was, no shadow ever had touched his fair name.

It is generally conceded that a strictly honorable man can not be a successful lawyer and politician. Edgar Grannell thought otherwise. He chose the law as his profession because his "inclination and genius" ran that way. He saw in it an opportunity to develop his "noblest and most virile manhood," and at the same time help his fellowman. He made the needs of humanity a study — scorned instigation —

and left selfishness so far out of the question that he refused to take any case which he had a suspicion had not right on its side.

But Edgar Grannell — while young in years — had put aside the soft dreams of youth, and was permitting the "hard, prosaic business that grinds the soul" to rob him of life's poesy. For Man is a dreamer at heart. He builds his air-castles in youth, as naturally as birds builds nests in spring; and while the stars he reaches in his flight may be meteors, not asteroids, and the ozone he drinks may all be imaginary, he is refreshed, rejuvenated, lifted above the smoke and din of Earth's sweatshops, and thus he preserves the soft imagery of his emotional nature, without which he ages prematurely and becomes cold and grim.

While Edgar Grannell could not yet be termed cold and grim, he had grown coolly indifferent to much that he once appreciated and enjoyed.

It had been eight years since his airy visions were dispelled. The bird with the sable wing suddenly swooped down and seized a fair girl, around whom his every plan for the future was circling. Then he rushed into politics, hoping to find alleviation in the gregarious whirl. Time and work had blunted his grief, and when the dapple shades of evening fell over the speeding train which was bearing him toward St. Louis, it found him wondering almost yearningly, if he could love a second time. He now, for the first time, permitted himself calmly to review the ashy past.

To stand again in the sunset glow
With the girl he loved in the long ago.

When the train reach St. Louis, Mr. Grannell kept Gwin in sight till she entered a cab and was whirled away, when he surprised himself by drawing a deep sigh.

"I wonder if dotage ever overtakes a man at my age? After having turned from scores of handsome women without caring for a second glance. I find myself gazing and actually sighing after — I know not whom."

That night in his dreams Edgar Grannell was a boy again, and was weaving a crown of apple blossoms for Roxey, his old sweetheart.

As he finished the wreath and was about to place it upon her brow, she turned and glided away; pointing to a form he had not observed, she called back: "I can not wear it, Edgar; crown her." He turned, and a peculiar thrill swept through him as he looked into the sad gray eyes of the woman he had met on the train. He took a step toward her, she waved him back: "No, see! I am already crowned;" and lo! upon her head — falling over her bright brown hair — was a chaplet of cypress and tuberoses.

After driving several blocks, the cab bearing Gwin stopped before a two-story house in a respectable locality.

A servant admitted and ushered her into a small, neat parlor. She handed him her card, and sat down wearily in the chair he offered her.

Soon there appeared a sweet-faced old lady. She held Gwin's card in her hand; but not having her glasses, she had not read it. Seeing Gwin, she took a step forward and stopped.

"It can not be — and yet —"

"It is;" put in Gwin, with a smile.

"Why, Mrs. Kahree! I can scarcely believe my eyes.

I am so glad to see you! But where is the judge? Is he well?''

''He is in Kansas City, and quite well,thank you.

''May I stay with you a few days, Mrs. Danks?''

''Why, certainly; it will give me pleasure. But I fear it will be hard for you to put up with my way of living.''

''No; Mrs. Danks, my circumstances are altogether changed. I must learn to adapt myself to new conditions.''

Mrs. Danks' eyes widened, but she refrained from questioning.

For two years she had been Mrs. Kahree's housekeeper. It was Mrs. Danks who opened the door to admit her the first time to her Kansas City home. Mrs. Danks was a lovable woman, and she and Mrs. Kahree had become attached to each other.

''Dear Mrs. Danks. I know you to be a true woman on whom I can depend. I have turned to you in an hour of deep affliction.''

She paused, and a slight tremor swept her face. To be obliged to give utterance to what she now must say, seemed degradation. Ground between the upper and nether millstones of loving loyalty and imposing obligation she felt benumbed. Her inexperience and the suddenness of her decision to leave Judge Kahree had prevented her from considering distant minutiae. It had not previously occurred to her that she would be required to make an explanation. To do so, seemed like sacrilege.

For a few seconds, her finer self struggled with its obsession. But there was no way out of it — it must be done, and, sick at heart, she resumed:

''I have told you, Mrs. Danks, that Judge Kahree is well. But I am a widow.''

Mrs. Danks threw up both hands.

"He was a kind, loving husband. But there were conditions, over which neither of us had any control, which made it impossible for us to live together longer. He insisted upon supporting me. But I shall support myself by teaching music.

"I wish to live as secluded as possible. I hope you will withhold my history — even from your closest friend."

Mrs. Danks was so overcome by hearing of the breaking up of this, as she supposed, model family that for a few minutes she was incapable of utterance. She sat wiping tears.

"No one shall ever hear the story from me," she answered, at last. "But oh, dear! I can not realize it. I would not think of questioning you, Mrs. Kahree, but I thought Judge Kahree the finest man in his home and the best man to a wife that I ever saw; and you — why, I don't see how a wife could be more devoted. The judge worshipped you — I know he did! It will kill him to live without you. He will not do it; he will come for you and take you back home; — I feel sure of it."

"No, Mrs. Danks. He expects to start for Europe tomorrow."

"I can't believe that he will give you up so easily."

Mrs. Danks continued to brush tears from her eyes. The separation of this pair seemed so sad to her, who had been so closely associated with them, and had witnessed their happiness. Judge Kahree had shown Mrs. Danks great kindness, and had been quite a benefactor to her. He held a high place in her esteem, and a warm place in her heart. The thought of his wandering friendless and alone in foreign lands, separated from the wife whom she knew he once idolized, appealed to her as peculiarly pathetic.

"He doesn't know where I am. He and I both realize that we are bound together by our marriage vow which we consider indissoluble, but we shall never see each other again."

This thought was too new to Gwin to have lost its rigor, and with the utterance her face grew tense.

"Although I do not understand it," replied Mrs. Danks, "knowing you as I do, I feel sure that you are confident you are doing right. I have had glimpses in the past of the clear vision and moral loftiness of your character."

"Thank you, Mrs. Danks; kind, appreciative words, just now are peculiarly sweet to me. For my heart is so sick — so sick!"

"I appreciate the honor you have done me in coming to me in your hour of trouble. If the friendship of one so humble can console and comfort you, it is freely given."

Again Gwin murmured her thanks.

"Are you still keeping boarding house?"

"Yes."

"Have you a room you can spare me?"

"Yes; fortunately, one of my best rooms is vacant."

"There is your trunk, I think," added Mrs. Dank's rising, as an express wagon stopped at the gate.

She stepped into the hall, as a man with a trunk upon his back appeared at the front door.

"Take it upstairs to the room on the southeast corner," she directed.

"Now, Mrs. Kahree, if you will follow me, I will show you to your room. I know you must be tired, you look pale and worn. "Our lunch hour is one o'clock. If you prefer to have yours in your room, I will send it up."

"Thank you; I will take both my meals in my room

to-day, if you please; but not after to-day. I belong to the working class now, I must do as they do.''

Mrs. Kahree found her room a large, light, well furnished front room, with an alcove.

After refreshing herself with a bath, she donned a dressing gown, and, throwing herself upon a couch, she slept awhile.

Soon after she awoke, John, a colored servant, came up with her luncheon, which he arranged upon a small table.

''Is dah some'n' mo' you wishes, please ma'am,'' he inquired, bowing almost to the floor.

''No; I think not,'' smiled Gwin, very much amused, for John's bow was as elaborate as the salaam of an Oriental. With another grand flourish, in which he bent himself quite double, he left the room, leaving Gwin laughing outright.

John was a yellow dandy, with all the imitative of a chimpanzee; and that bow, which he called the ''bend-a-ma-lah,'' he had caught from a french dancing-master who boarded with Mrs. Danks. Where he got that compound arrangement of letters, the gods alone are able to reveal. But it was what John termed a ''high style'' word. He divided his time between practicing the ''bend-a-ma-lah;'' courting Lena, the chambermaid; ''dressin' his se'f up;'' and a small amount of work; well interspersed with monkey shines.

Mrs. Kahree spent her first day in St. Louis resting her over-taxed nerves.

She rose early the next morning, feeling that she must not spend any more idle time. So, after breakfast, she hurried out, boarded a car, went to a music store, rented a piano, and had it put in her room.

The thought of teaching music gave her pleasure. She

knew nothing about the drudgery of it. For music possessed an entrancing power over her which was perceptible the moment her fingers touched the keys of an instrument. It stole through every pulse, like the magic of sorcery, and captivated her faculties; while her listening ear wove her joys and sorrows into the harmony in swelling crescendos and low modulations.

One day, several weeks later, Mrs. Danks came to Gwin's room with a daily paper in her hand and something startling in her face. Gwin soon saw that she was trying to prepare her for a shock. But she could not ask a question.

Presently, Mrs. Danks broke the information that the city of A., in the state of Georgia, had been visited by a cyclone.

Still Gwin stared at her in dumb fear.

"Your stepfather was seriously injured — in fact, Mrs. Kahree, he was killed."

Gwin sprang to her feet, then she sat down, limp and white, and reached for the paper.

Mrs. Danks drew it back.

"Not yet — wait awhile."

After a minute, she added.

"The twins were injured, too."

Again Gwin sprang to her feet.

"Killed?" she cried, with wild eyes.

Mrs. Danks went to her side, and placed an arm about her.

"But Mamma and Harry? are they? —"

"Harry is uninjured."

"And Mamma?"

Mrs. Danks was silent, and Gwin would have fallen, had not her friend held her. The shock was terrible. For

several days following she was unable to rise from her bed. But again her strong constitution prevailed and once more she heroically took up the burden of her solitary, loveless life, animated only by a purpose to live, because she could not die.

She had written to her mother and Harry, telling them of her whereabouts, and requesting them never to mention to her her desertion of the judge, or question her about it. She told them that she was broken hearted, that the judge was a good husband, and she still loved him.

In reply to the telegram which she received from Harry, she wrote him that she was sorry she had not gone to Spencer Place and died with the dear ones.

If these letters had reached Harry at any other time, he would have taken the first train to St. Louis, to see if Gwin had lost her mind. But they came at a time when he was almost frenzied with grief. The dear old home was partially wrecked, and his father, his stepmother, and dear little Zoe and Rob lay side by side in the darkened drawing room.

Brave and strong though he was, he felt for awhile as if this would kill him. Like Gwin, he was prostrated. But at last, pale and haggard, he set about having the debris removed, the house repaired, and the grounds put in order. After all was in ship-shape again, he wrote and begged Gwin to come home.

"O Harry," she replied, "it would be so sweet to be back at the dear old shelter, but I can not — I must not! I am settled here and doing well. I am determined to make my own living. I can live more secluded here where I am not known.

"I know, as you say in your letter, we could be a comfort to each other. But, Harry dear, we must do without

each other awhile. Perhaps, after a few months, I may see my way clear to return to Spencer Place, but not now.''

Harry wrote again and insisted. But Gwin refused.

CHAPTER IX

IT IS said that Villeneuve, Switzerland, is one of the most beautiful and attractive spots in the world. There before it, at Jura's base, Lake Geneva lies palpitating in lustrous effulgence. There are the immutable Alps, and the Castle of Chillon.

The hour was early, scarcely daylight, when Judge Kahree left a hotel at Villeneuve and walked slowly down a promenade which ran along the beach for several blocks.

The town was sleeping. An occasional milk vendor's cart rattled up the street, and servants were sweeping and washing front steps, here and there. The judge had arrived at this pilgrim's rest the previous evening. He found so much in these scenes to evoke meditation that he strolled on and on, his mental vision busy with bivouacs of generations long moldered to dust.

As the sun's first rays touched the lake, casting myriads of diamonds over its pellucid face, and converting the mists at Meillerie's base into an iridescent drapery, the white walls of the castle burst upon his sight. He paused, lifted his hat reverentially, and stood for a long time with bared head, looking about him.

Several schooners lay at anchor along the beach, a pretty yacht danced merrily across the water, while many a white swan spread his snowy sail between, and innumerable sea gulls dipped and laved, glistening in the sun like burnished silver.

At first glance we see little change in Judge Kahree,

though it has been four years since last we met him. But closer scrutiny reveals a few silver threads about his temples, and the tracery of sorrow's pencil is visible upon his face.

At last he turned to retrace his steps. As he approached the hotel, his eye was caught by the flutter of a white dress among the vines upon a portico. A tall, finely poised girl stood leaning against one of the fluted pillars, with her back to him. Watching her, as a stream of splendor from an eastern sky fell over her, he mused:

"No Greek dream — however extravagant — of the 'white-armed, ox-eyed Hera,' could surpass her in beauty."

While American born, Rose Ruthvon's type was of the far East: warm, rich, voluptuous, dazzling. She was the petted, only child of a college chum of Judge Kahree's.

Mr. Ruthvon was a widower and an invalid, who, accompanied by his daughter, had been traveling two years in the hope of regaining his health.

A year ago the judge had come upon them at a summer resort in Wales; since then they had been wandering about together.

For some weeks Mr. Ruthvon had been failing. The doctors recommended Villeneuve and predicted that there he would rapidly recuperate.

"Good morning, Miss Ruthvon," and the judge, removed his hat, as he ascended the steps to the portico.

Rose swung around with a start. She was dreaming of the judge at the moment he spoke. She supposed him still in bed.

"Good morning," she answered, as the color in her cheeks deepened, contrasting beautifully with her dark Venetian orbs.

She turned her face toward the water again, lest he read

the mystic language which she felt was speaking in her blushes and her faltering eyes.

But he had observed it — nor was this the first time. It saddened him, however, for his heart was all Gwin's. While he knew that they were separated forever, he never thought of divorce or remarriage.

His manner toward Rose in their travels together had been most exemplary. Still, his conscience was not quite clear. Rose and her father never had heard of his marriage, and he — not dreaming that harm could come of it — had purposely withheld the information. It was only recently that his mistake had dawned upon him. He regretted his thoughtlessness and determined to disclose the facts to Mr. Ruthvon on the first opportunity.

The summer previous to his marriage, Rose had met Judge Kahree at Newport, where, with her mother, she had spent the season. Mere child though she was, she had left her heart with him, and from that time she had dreamt of him and him only. She determined that if she could not have Judge Kahree she would never marry, and she coldly turned from the advances of all.

Hat in hand, the judge was passing on into the hall when Rose said over her shoulder:

"Judge, Father sent me to find you with the request that you call at his room as soon as you have breakfasted."

"You have seen him this morning, then?"

"Yes."

"How did he stand the trip?"

"I never saw him look so jaded."

"A few hours rest will bring him out all right, I think," replied the judge, stepping to the girl's side. You look as

fresh as a morning glory. I did not expect to see you out so early after yesterday's fatiguing journey.''

''I could hardly wait for daylight,'' Rose answered. ''I have wished to come here ever since I first read 'Lake Lemon,' when I was a child in school.''

For awhile the two stood silent, wholly absorbed in contemplation of the scenes about them.

''Glorious! isn't it?'' the judge said finally.

Yes; inspiring. 'Tis said that this is the home of the nine Muses. I have been thinking of Byron all morning — poor unfortunate wicked gifted Byron. How he loved these scenes!''

''And placed eternal distinction upon them,'' the judge appended. He turned his eyes toward the castle and rehearsed: —

> '' 'Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
> And thy sad floor an altar — for 'twas trod,
> Until his very steps have left a trace
> Worn as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
> By Bonnivard.' ''

''I am glad I did not live in more primitive days, when men were led into seas of blood by trivial provocations,'' declared Rose.

''Like that which Paris gave Manelaus, for instance?'' smiled the judge.

''That citation elucidates my text precisely,'' the girl rejoined with quick humor as she turned her rose-dappled face and met his quizzical smile with one equally bantering. ''A bloody war over a handsome flirt, and it is questionable whether we are yet too civilized for that. Possibly, after all, I haven't gained much by being a modern product.''

The conversation was interrupted by the ringing of a gong.

The judge and Rose turned into the hall, and, with a stream of others, entered the breakfast room.

As they came out into the hall, after breakfast, Rose turned toward the portico.

"I will go out here awhile; Papa wishes to see you alone."

Judge Kahree bowed and entered an elevator. He was soon in his friend's room. He found Mr. Ruthvon reclining upon a couch, looking very ill.

"How are you this morning?" inquired the judge, taking the sick man's extended hand and pressing it warmly.

Mr. Ruthvon pointed to an easy chair.

"Draw it this way a little nearer. . . . . Well, Arrel, old friend, my days are numbered. I want to have a talk with you while I have strength," he said, as the judge sat down.

"Come now, Ruthvon, this will never do! You must not give way to despondency."

"I am not despondent, but I realize my condition. Suffering has made me tired of life; I don't care how soon release comes. But, Arrel, I have a load upon my mind. I can't die satisfied until I have disposed of it."

The sick man closed his eyes. After a few minutes he opened them and turned them full into those of the judge.

"My burden is Rose. I can not die and leave her without a protector. She doesn't know anything about the rough side of life. As you are aware, she is as inexperienced in all that is hard and taxing as an unfledged bird. She couldn't battle with the world. Perhaps we made a mistake in sheltering her so carefully from contact with those things. But it is too late now to correct mistakes.

"Rose has had scores of suitors, among them the most

eligible men in the land. But she has cared for none of them. Since her mother's death she clings to me so closely that I can not see how she is going to get along without me; unless — well — I may as well out with it, Arrel; Rose loves you but she doesn't know that I am in possession of her secret."

Again Mr. Ruthvon paused and closed his eyes.

"I had hoped," he began again, "that you might love Rose well enough to marry her. I would rather give her to you than to any other man alive."

"Ruthvon, I have a living wife."

Mr. Ruthvon had risen to his elbow. He sank back upon the pillow white and almost fainting.

The judge arose, and, stepping to a table, poured some cordial into a glass, gave it to the sick man, and he soon revived.

"I have had it in my mind several times to tell you about my marriage," resumed Judge Kahree, after the color had returned to his friend's face. "But the subject is painful; I have avoided it for that reason."

"You know, Ruthvon, when and where I began to sow my wild oats; — and you know how profuse was that sowing. Well — I married — married the only woman I ever loved. To-day, while my heart is yearning for wife and home, I am a wanderer, reaping the harvest of that sowing."

This brief introspection had brought beads to Judge Kahree's brow. He took his handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped his face; then he sat down, and leaned back in the chair. For a few moments he sat ruminating sadly, his face turned to a window, his eyes idly skimming the scintillating waters below.

"What a mocking travesty my life has been," he began

again in a slow voice. "Yet, I blame no one but Arrel Kahree."

Then Judge Kahree told his friend the whole sad story. After he had finished, neither spoke for awhile.

"My wife has a warm ideal nature, — passionate — but rational always — and always sweet and tender. When she learned the truth, it crushed her. But she had no fantastic wish to court epic martyrdom for herself, as women so often do when they have connubial troubles. She took up her burden without fanfaronade and told no one that she had a burden. While she refused to continue to be my wife she consented to live under the same roof with me until I could endure it no longer. For I was as madly in love with her the day I left her as the day I married her. We played a farce to the world five years. I had repented; but that could not restore to me my treasure. . . . .

. . . "Ah Ruthvon!" — after a long pause, "such love as I had for that woman is a thing to be feared. It was madness! — madness! I have concluded that I must be a strong man — or I would have committed suicide. For when I lost her, I lost all that was worth living for. At one time, my honor, reason and conscience were all subservient to that mad affection."

"Then, I am to understand that the separation is final?"

"Yes; oh, yes! It is all over between us. I never expect to see her face again in this world."

The judge arose and began to pace the floor, as he always did when he permitted his mind to dwell upon the past.

Mr. Ruthvon closed his eyes and waited nervously until Judge Kahree resumed his seat, which he did not do for some time.

"Well, Arrel," began Mr. Ruthvon, as the judge sat

down, "it is no use for me to have nice scruples now. I am going to ask a favor of you. I know that my little girl loves you. You know it, too; you are not blind. It is for her happiness that I am planning. She would have been well married before this, had it not been for that season with you at Newport. I want your promise that you will secure a divorce and marry Rose. You will never regret it. She is sweet and good. As for beauty and accomplishments, she has few peers."

"Yes, yes; Rose is all that, I am aware. But, Ruthvon, I can not comply with your request. Such an arrangement would be unjust to her. She would not marry me if she knew the truth, — knew that I did not love her."

"She needn't know it;" quickly responded the anxious father. "It will not hurt her, if she doesn't know it. Besides, you couldn't be so closely associated with as attractive a woman as Rose is, without loving her. It doesn't belong to human nature — at least not to man's nature, at your age, to resist youth and beauty.

"You say yourself that your heart yearns for love and home. A perfectly natural feeling. The trouble is you have become morbid over the loss of the other woman. If you marry Rose, you will soon be as madly in love with her as you were with the other, and it is the very thing you should strive to do, since there is no hope of reconciliation. Life's too short to nurse remorse. The past is gone, let it go. The future is yours, make the best of it, Arrel my heart is set on this; I can not give it up. Remember I once — at the risk of my own life — saved you from drowning. You now have it in your power to lift a load from my dying heart. Will you refuse to do it?"

"Now see here, Ruthvon, brace up and expunge the

thought of death. You'll live years, if you determine to do it. You are tired, that's all — exhausted."

Mr. Ruthvon threw out a hand with an impatient gesture.

"Arrel, answer me! Will you, or will you not grant my dying request? Do you remember how I nursed you through that attack of fever in Cuba? You would have died then, had it not been for me."

"I have not forgotten, Ruthvon."

After this there fell a period of silence between them, in which the voice of time upon the mantel proclaimed the escaping moments in strong accents, and its tick-tick-tick seemed to Mr. Ruthvon to grow louder and more accentuated with each second. Judge Kahree was rapt in meditation. Mr. Ruthvon watched him narrowly, glancing anxiously at the clock, now and then. Finally, the judge arose and began an abstracted pace through the room. Mr. Ruthvon closed his eyes and endeavored to hold his nerves. The minutes were passing. Would the judge never desist? He stopped before a window; his eyes wandered over the scenes which two hours ago possessed such thrilling interest for him. Now they were unobserved. Another of life's crises confronted him. What should he do? Which way was right? At last, to the great relief of the sick man, the judge sat down.

"Ruthvon, it is hard to refuse the dying request of such a friend as you have been to me. I can't refuse; yet, I tremble at the thought of granting it. I will do so, however, on conditions."

"What are the conditions?"

"That I be permitted to tell your daughter the whole story."

"Oh, that will never do, never! Rose would not refuse to comply with my dying behest; even if she knew you had no

love for her; but it would make such a cruel wound. I can not permit it!"

"Very well, then, I will have no more to do with it. I have practiced my last deception."

Judge Kahree arose and turned toward the door.

"Sit down! sit down! don't leave me!" cried Mr. Ruthvon excitedly, looking so weak and nervous that the judge again administered the cordial.

"Ruthvon, you should not permit this agitation; it is dangerous."

The invalid did not reply; for some time he lay with closed eyes. At length he reached out a hand, and touched a bell-button. . . . A servant answered.

"Send Miss Ruthvon to me!"

Soon Rose swept into the room, bringing with her an air of freshness and perfume. As she passed the judge her skirts brushed his feet, and he gave her a sweeping glance. He was not the sort of man to be blind to feminine attractiveness. But it had never disturbed his constancy to Gwin. He acknowledged Rose's opulence of charm as rare, acknowledged her the most beautiful woman he ever had seen, but not the most fascinating to him. He knew that many a man had plead in vain for the love of this exquisite creature; that she was casting rich heart treasures at his feet, which he might gather and garner, if he would. But his heart turned backward and its cry was, "Gwin! oh, Gwin!"

Rose bent over her father and placed a hand upon his brow.

"You look so ill this morning, Papa, you frighten me."

Mr. Ruthvon drew her down and kissed her.

"I am very ill, dear. You must begin to think of what you will do when I am gone."

"Hush, Papa! I can not bear it!"

Rose sank to her knees, covered her face with her hands, and buried it upon his bosom. For awhile no sound was heard, save her low sobs, and the tick of the clock.

Mr. Ruthvon lay with closed eyes, tenderly stroking his daughter's hair, while now and then a tear stole down his face and fell upon the pillow.

"I sent for you, Rose dear, to tell you that I must leave you soon, and I must make some provision for your future. You can not battle with the world alone, I know that. Little is left from the financial wreck which caught me two years ago. What answer can I give your mother, when I meet her, if I leave you unprotected? Oh, I can't do it! and, dear, if my plan doesn't meet with your approval, you must listen to reason, and remember your father knows best."

"O, Papa! I can not live without you!"

Again, there was silence in the room, save for her sobs. Tears chased each other down Mr. Ruthvon's face, while his arm encircled his stricken daughter and held her close.

The judge arose, crossed the room to a window and stood with his back to the pathetic scene.

After waiting some time, Mr. Ruthvon said:

"Now dear, calm yourself and listen, while Judge Kahree tells you the story of his life. Then I have a request to make. If you refuse to grant it, it will break my heart."

"It is granted. You would not ask me to do wrong; so, whatever it is, it shall be as you wish."

"Thank you, darling!

"Go on Arrel."

Judge Kahree slowly turned, crossed the room and resumed his chair.

"This may seem to you an inopportune time, Rose, to

be required to listen to the story of my life. But your father has requested me — in the event of his demise — to become your guardian. I can do so only with your consent. Before you are asked to give it, you are entitled to enlightenment regarding some regrettable happenings in my experience.''

The judge then rehearsed the essential details in a delicate manner. He could see only the side of the girl's face; it was still covered with her hands and rested upon her father's bosom. With the finishing of the narrative a hush fell over the trio which was broken by Judge Kahree:

''Now, Rose, the proposition before us is this:

''Your father is my senior by some years; he is an invalid; I am in good health; consequently, I may outlive him. I have this day given him my promise that, in case I do, I will — with your permission — take his place as your protector. He stipulates that I am to keep you with me and associate with you as closely as he has done. For me to do this without a marriage ceremony would be to bring reproach upon us both. I can not offer you a husband's love while my wife is living — even after I have divorced her, — a thing I would not do under any other circumstances, — although the separation is final. If death should sever the tie and spare me, and my love would be acceptable to you then, you should freely have the vacant place in my heart. For, Rose, it would be easy to worship at your shrine. If I had not had this great love and sorrow in my heart, I should probably have been at your feet long ago.

''But that is neither here nor there. The proposition is, that we are to take refuge under a marriage ceremony. I can give you a husband's care and protection and a brother's love. But I have conscientious scruples against the remarriage of divorced people. You know, by the confession I just made,

that I have not always been conscientious along all lines. But I have always looked upon the marriage vow as most sacred and I feel that I am in honor bound by it until death severs the tie. So the marital relation between us would simply be semblance — we will live together as brother and sister, while to the world we shall appear to be man and wife. Rose, will you consent to this — will you marry me?''

What a strange offer of marriage! — what an unheard of proposition! Rose recalled the scores of proposals she had listened to which were fairly aflame with protestations of affection; but which, because of her love for this man, had fallen upon her ear impressionless; and this venal, merciless offer of terms was from the man she worshiped — the man who had filled her dreams since she was a mere child.

''O, Papa! spare me! spare me! I pray you!''

She lifted her head and looked into her father's eyes.

''Do not insist upon this marriage! How can I marry him, knowing that he does not love me! How can I consent to burden him so! Spare me this horrible fate! Oh, spare me, Papa, I implore!''

''Rose dear, there's no other way; you have promised already. You will not now refuse to grant my dying request.''

With a moan, the poor girl's face fell into her hands again.

''Rose, you will not burden me; I have more money than I know how to spend. Besides, I need you fully as much as you will need me — perhaps more. Think of my lonely life. I need the sympathy and companionship of just such a pure, sweet sister. I never had a sister. Let me have one. Rose, don't refuse me!''

''O, Papa, spare me! spare me!'' Again Rose lifted her head and looked pleadingly into her father's face.

"My child, you do not know what you are doing."

"I can not do this! oh, I can not!"

"My beautiful darling, you are very unsophisticated, or you would know that the man sitting there — when once bound to you — can no more resist you than he can resist the air he breathes. (Pardon me, both of you, I am obliged to speak plainly.) Marry him, child, and win his love. You need not put forth the least effort. Be your own sweet self, and Arrel Kahree will soon be a slave to his affection for you."

Rose's face grew scarlet; she broke into fresh sobs.

The judge was all alive to her trying position.

"Rose," he pleaded, "I am very desolate; marry me for my own sake! let that be the only consideration. There are few pleasures in my life now. I really need you. I will do all in my power to make you happy. Do not refuse me, Rose! it will disappoint me more than you think."

Mr. Ruthvon was very much exhausted. He now fell into a coma.

Observing it, Rose turned her head, and beckoned the judge to lean toward her. She put her lips close to his ear and whispered:

"His mind was wandering, or he would not have made so flighty a request. Let us drop the subject forever."

Soft as was her whisper, it reached the ear rendered acute by the near approach of dissolution.

"Your promise, Rose," gasped Mr. Ruthvon.

Rose turned and looked into his face. It was ghastly.

"Yes, Papa, I will! I will!"

The dying man smiled, pressed her hand and was gone.

CHAPTER X

ONE week later Judge Kahree left Villeneuve, to return to the United States for his divorce. Rose accompanied him as far as Bologna, where he secured a maid for her, and a quiet boarding place with refined Americans.

The morning on which he was to sail they were alone in the parlor at her boarding house. She had risen early, to accompany him to the pier. She had her hat on and was drawing on a pair of long gloves which, in her absent minded state, she had neglected to don in her dressing-room. The judge stepped to her side, and buttoned them; saying, in the tender, sympathetic tone habitual to him when addressing afflicted ones, or those weaker or older than himself:

"I am sorry to leave you now, Rose. I know how very lonely you will be. I shall not be gone a day longer than is necessary."

Rose could not reply. It required all her strength and pride to preserve a calm exterior.

The day was fine. They preferred to walk to the wharf — a mile away. There was no necessity for haste, so they strolled leisurely, while the judge talked to Rose cheeringly of the time when he would return, and they would renew companionship.

She looked divinely beautiful that morning. At her father's request Rose did not wear mourning. He wished her always to be bright for Judge Kahree.

The judge carried with him to America the picture of her face as it looked under the shady hat with its broad lace

strings looped loosely under her pretty chin, and its soft brim bending at one side under a weight of crimson moss roses. Her velvety eyes could not now hide from the judge her great love for him. Her cheeks and lips were aglow with rich color induced by the intensity of her feeling. She had forgotten every thing but that her father was gone, and that the judge was leaving her forever, perhaps — for she had been given a new realization of life's uncertainty.

When they reached the wharf, the judge lingered beside Rose until the gang-plank was about to be taken in. Then, with a clasp of the hand, he hurried aboard, and she watched the gulf widen between them until the ship disappeared. When she turned, walked a few rods, and, regardless of staring idlers, sank to a bench, buried her face in her handkerchief, and was sobbing softly.

"My child, some of life's lessons are very bitter."

Rose lifted her face. The speaker was an elderly Roman Catholic priest.

"O Father, I am so desolate! A week ago, my father died. To-day, the last link with the old life seems severed."

"My child, human life is a sorrowful pilgrimage to the shrine eternal. The Church is a blessed retreat where you may find peace."

"Don't talk to me about the Church!" protested Rose impatiently. She knew little about religion and cared less, and this sounded like mockery in her half-dazed, despairing condition.

"You will find alleviation from sorrow in the path of duty," insisted the priest.

"Where does my duty lie?"

The priest pointed to a large building in the distance.

"The duty of some is there — the duty of others is

elsewhere. You can possibly answer that question better for yourself, my daughter. But the human heart should be made a solemn sacrifice to Heaven."

The girl rose to her feet. If the priest had proposed to lead her into a dolorous morass, to find surcease from grief, it would have seemed quite as reasonable to her as this. Her life had suddenly become tragical, she could not understand how religion could change it.

"You make me feel as if I were going into a hideous nightmare. What do I care for the Church, or Heaven itself! I have no crime to expiate."

She pointed across the water.

"Every pulse of the engine of yon out-going ship is bearing further and further from me the only being upon earth whose love I crave. God — if there is one — has refused me even this. Yet, you would have me to cover as in a funeral urn the ashes of my heart, and offer them a sacrifice to Heaven. Will nothing appease Heaven but blood? Give me a religion in which there is no bleeding sacrifice, if you would have me to accept it. I can no more worship the God of Christendom than I could worship the Bull Apis, of the Pharaohs. The philosophy of Omar is more to my taste."

"Girl! Girl! what are you saying? Take that back, it is blasphemy! Take it back! Don't leave this spot with those fearful words standing in eternity against you!"

"Is it so terrible to have spoken the truth?" Rose coolly, stooped and picked up her handkerchief, which had fallen at her feet.

"You are dazzlingly beautiful, child," murmured the priest, gazing at her with a sort of fascinated horror, "but you are not sane."

"I believe you are right," she assented, with a slight

curl of her rose-leaf lips. "Since you have called my attention to it, I suspect it myself. Such garrulousness as I have just been displaying is not natural with me. Henceforth, I shall endeavor to be sufficiently sane to keep my troubles to myself."

Rose sank to the seat again, for her limbs trembled under her. The high tension to which her usually calm nerves had been strung for the last week had brought her to the verge of a breakdown. It was not like her to be uncivil to any one, especially to a senior. If Judge Kahree had heard her talking to the priest, and had observed her vehemence and impatience, he scarcely could have believed this the quiet, well-bred lady he had traveled with so many months. But the poor girl was almost distracted.

"Pardon me, sir," she said, offering the priest her hand.

He took it. It was cold and trembling, and she looked ill.

She rose, and slowly dragged herself back to her boarding house.

The priest stood gazing after her.

"Fair and sacrilegious as Belial," he mused. "The Church shall have no concord with Belial."

Arrel Kahree, going forth upon what he believed was an errand of duty was performing an act of self-sacrifice. The thought of a divorce hurt him. In fact he did not believe that any court could release him from the vow he took that October noonday at Spencer Place. So, when he shall have received the bill it will be a mere empty form to him and he will consider himself as much Gwin's husband as before it was granted. For he possessed a logical mind. He realized that the indissolubility of marriage involves an eternal principle which constitutes the only foundation for the most sacred

of all institutions — the family — without which civilization must deteriorate and die.

When marriage lost its sanctity, Rome fell.

Under the pressure of such suasion as Mr. Ruthvon had used upon Judge Kahree, any man, however wise and far-seeing, might be induced into some measure which he would scout as ridiculously impracticable for others.

To believe himself able to accomplish that in which another would fail is a man characteristic — a masterful trait it is, and the world owes much of its greatness to it. But, on the other hand, many a man owes his downfall to it. This trait leads men to risk tampering with intoxicants, while watching other tipplers fall by hundreds. You rarely hear a drinking man say that he was surprised to see the other fellow go down. He will tell you that he was expecting it. But himself — oh, that's different!

Judge Kahree would not have had the unique proposition which he had entered into whispered among his acquaintances for his right hand. Not that he anticipated failure. But he told himself that, while it was not of his choosing, it was his own affair, and it was a case in which the opinions of other men were untenable.

CHAPTER XI

TIME had partially annulled old feelings in Gwin's mind and given her a new outlook on life. Outwardly she appeared unchanged. A little stronger force of self reliance, perhaps, was in her bearing and her face was alight with contentment. She was still in St. Louis, boarding with Mrs. Danks. She had set about earning her daily bread as if she had been accustomed to it. It was not easy. But as the months went by, she became inured to the hardship and discouragements of a teacher's life, of which dull pupils with sprawling fingers and eyes that seldom read correctly are largely components. Sometimes, after spending an hour bending above such a one, she sank down exhausted and heart sick for awhile. At such times she comforted herself by comparing her lot with that of Mrs. Danks, who was a lady, and had seen better days, but who, in her old age, was carrying the burden of a boarding house. This comparison usually left Gwin well satisfied with her lot.

Judge Kahree had left America without having heard of the terrible tragedy at Spencer Place. He supposed Gwin was safely sheltered there. He had written her that a bank account was at her disposal in Kansas City. The letter was sent to Spencer Place and, forwarded to St. Louis.

One Sunday morning, as Mrs. Kahree took her seat at the breakfast table, John came prancing forward with his graceful "bend-a-ma-lah." He took her order, and with another low bow, turned and tripped off toward the kitchen. He met Lena in the back hall.

"John, you knows what you minds me ob when you makes yo' ol' bend-a-ma-lah?"

"No:" grinned John, stopping short in the hope of getting a compliment.

"You looks like fish-wo'm, squi'min' roun' on a hook: he-he-he, you sho does."

John made a dive at Lena, catching her by the sleeve, which tore out, leaving a yellow arm dangling behind the rags. She dodged into the kitchen, running plump against Aunt Cinda, who was carefully crossing the room with a crock full of milk. Down went Cinda, milk, crock and all, with a splash, a crash, and a yell.

For once, John got his order without Cinda's assistance, and escaped before she could regain her feet and get the milk out of her eyes. But her tongue was loose, and had it been as dangerous as it sounded, John's mortal career would have ended then and there.

"If I evah lives to git up off dis floah, I's gwine to kill you two niggahs — shoah's my name's Cinderella!" she gurgled, as milk spurted from her nose. "Look at me, Lena! look at yo' mammy!"

Aunt Cinda rolled over with a groan, then slowly rose, while little streams of milk trickled from her nose, forehead, chin, and finger tips.

Lena began to grin.

"Did it hu't you much, Mammy?"

"Shut up!" yelled Aunt Cinda, "you nasty, little blubbeh-mouth fool! Git a bucket an' mop, an' clean up dat slop, 'fo' I make soap-grease o' yo' hide! an' if dat no 'count, good-fo'-nothin', yallah imp, John cross my path any mo' to-day, wif de help ob de Lohd, I'se gwine to scal' him! I

shoah will! I's tihed dis niggah foolery; I can't stan' it no mo', an' I'se not gwine to try!"

In about three minutes after John had left the dining room he was back arranging Mrs. Kahree's breakfast about her plate, bowing and smiling, as if his death warrant was not at that very moment being read in the kitchen. The kitchen was far enough from the dining-room that no sound of the tragedy had reached Mrs. Kahree's ears. The dining-room was cool, quiet and beautifully clean.

But John was in a dilemma. In the midst of his contortions he was busy trying to formulate a plan. Sunday morning was the only time he was ever in much of a hurry. He liked to get through with his work on Sundays early, and "fix hisse'f up," and promenade in the back yard. He had a gorgeous new "yallah" necktie to exhibit on this particular morning to the various back door gazers in that neighborhood and time was precious and fleeting. But how was he to get into the kitchen, to do his work?

John tiptoed along the back hall to the kitchen door and listened. He could hear the teakettle singing on the stove. The sound made him shudder. Aunt Cinda was as big as two of him. If she ever got him in the kitchen with her back against the door, he was a "gone cone." She was a virago, when her temper was up, and Mrs. Danks out of sight.

While John was not exactly worth his weight in gold as a servant, Mrs. Danks had raised him and was partial to him. A fact which Aunt Cinda was not slow to discover, and it aroused her hatred. Like the proverbial horse-trading deacon, John was honest, (as far as the circumstances in the case required), and Mrs. Danks trusted him further than she did Aunt Cinda and Lena, — but not much further.

As Mrs. Kahree was the last one to breakfast, and John's services were no longer required in the dining room, he skipped up to Mrs. Danks' room and tapped at the door.

"Miss Sally."

"Well, John what is it?" inquired Mrs. Danks, without opening the door.

"Aunt Cinda done wash huh ol' black face in a crock o' milk."

"Why John!"

The door flew open, and out came Mrs. Danks.

"Yes'm, she shoah did, I done ketched huh."

John looked very serious until Mrs. Danks turned and started downstairs; then his mouth was stretched almost from ear to ear, and he danced along behind her in high glee. He now had a free passport to the kitchen. Mrs. Danks knew Aunt Cinda's weakness and (although there was not a pot in the kitchen as black and shiny as her face,) if she were told that a milk bath would improve her complexion, she would try the experiment.

They found Aunt Cinda standing in the center of the kitchen the picture of Ethiopian fury. She had taken off her milk-soaked dress, which left her robed in a red petticoat and a short sleeved underwaist. With a towel, she was trying to wipe the milk from her woolly pate.

Lena, about to explode with laughter, but not daring to let her mother discover it, was on her knees with a bucket and mop beside her, picking up the pieces of broken crock.

"Now, Miss Sally," grinnned John, "you sees fo' yo'se'f."

There was murder in Aunt Cindy's' eyes as she turned on him.

"Miss Sally, dat coon done knock me down, an' t'row a crock full o' milk obah me!"

"Did I, Lena?"

"No: Mammy know you nebah. I run gin huh, an' she fall down, an' spill de milk on huhse'f. John nebah touched huh."

"Lena, let John clean up that slop, and you put on your clean dress, and go to your chamber-work."

With this command, Mrs. Danks withdrew.

There was an ominous scowl on Aunt Cinda's face which made John feel uncomfortable. He began to plan to get her in good humor.

"Aunt Cinda, if you knows how good lookin' you is in dat red ski't an' white wais,' wid yo putty fat a'ms and shiny feet, you wouldn't nebah put on yo' dress no mo'. She look jes like a show pictuah, don' she, Lena?"

"Yes," giggled Lena, "if Mammy would dance she'd be shuah nuff show."

"Aw, git away from huh!" exclaimed Aunt Cinda.

John glanced at her face; its muscles had relaxed somewhat.

"Lena," he continued, "I wishes you took mo' aftah yo' mammy. Jis look at yo' little ol', skinny a'ms. I don't know what make me like you so good. I think de fat black gals heap puttier 'n de yallah kind. If I jis been 'roun' when you was a gal, Aunt Cinda; oh, golly! Lena, if you don' drink mo' milk, I's gwine to trade you off."

"Dah's some down dah she bettah lick up," put in Aunt Cinda, trying to preserve her frown, but grinning, in spite of herself.

With a wink at Lena, who understood and answered with a snicker, John took off his white jacket, apron and cap,

hung them upon a nail, rolled up his sleeves, drew on a pair of overalls, and took Lena's place on the floor, feeling that he could safely turn his back on Cinda and the steaming tea-kettle now. Lena left the room, to obey Mrs. Danks' orders, and quiet again reigned in the kitchen.

An hour later Mrs. Kahree and Mrs. Danks came down-stairs together ready for church.

The day was delightful. The city lay quiet and peaceful in the golden quivering air, while sparrows twittered cheerily on every hand.

Gwin felt very happy. She and Mrs. Danks went out and turned into the long avenue of elms which bordered the walk to the church.

Gwin was dressed in white. Her eyes looked deep and starry, under her shady hat. Mrs. Danks thought she never had seen her look fairer.

After the service was over, when Gwin turned to leave the pew, she found herself looking into a pair of magnetic eyes which evoked the mental query: "Who is that man? where have I met him? His features seem quite familiar to me." Her mind turned backward, as if to some sad, half-forgotten dream. But all efforts proved futile to recall it.

The Honorable Edgar Grannell had started for a short stroll that fine Sabbath morning, and its superb charm had lured him on until he was many blocks from home. Passing the church, as the people were congregating, he felt a little weary, and concluded to go in and rest.

As the usher was seating him, a lady passed into the opposite pew. At the first glimpse of her, his heart gave a mighty leap. There was the face which had haunted him for months, despite the fact that he had poured cloud-bursts of

scorn upon himself, and called himself hard names — such as imbecile and idiot.

That sermon seemed ridiculously short to Edgar Grannell. To every one else in the church, it was sufficiently lengthy. It was with reluctance that he arose, to hear the benediction. He liked short sermons, as a rule. But he told himself that he had not had time to rest.

He passed down the aisle directly behind Mrs. Kahree, and he walked behind her and Mrs. Danks until they entered the gate at the boarding-house.

The next Sunday morning the Honorable Edgar Grannell attended that church again. The sermon seemed dry and long this time, for the magnet was wanting.

The next day he went to the boarding house behind the door of which the one he sought had disappeared, and engaged a few days board. Not a glimpse of Gwin did he have. He remained there a week.

As a last resort, he inquired of the landlady — a big red-faced, red-haired woman — who declared she had no knowledge of any lady bearing the description he gave. For some unaccountable reason — perhaps because of the fear of losing her handsome boarder — she failed to tell him that she had lived in that house less than a week, when he came, and that Mrs. Danks had moved to a larger house, in a more desirable locality.

Mr. Grannell was more disappointed than he had been for many a day — more dissappointed than he liked to admit, even to himself. So, as he left the place, he tried to joke with himself:

"I am reminded of Orpheus, when he came up out of the long, dark passage followed by Eurydice," he smiled. "When just as he reached the upper air with her and was

sure he had her safe, she was snatched back, and the gate closed and locked between them. No wonder the poor fellow wailed his woe. But I will profit by his fate and keep my dismal song to myself — for bacchanals are still fierce. I have lost my Eurydice — forever, no doubt. I feel like weeping tears of blood; but I shall have to grin and bear it,'' and he did grin, in spite of his disappointment.

CHAPTER XII

MANY months have flown, and not another glimpse of the one he sought, has Edgar Grannell had. He long since has given up the search.

One autumn morning about sun-up, a train steamed into St. Louis and a gentleman with a very pleasing personality stepped from it. The Honorable Edgar Grannell was returning from Havana, where he had been several months. With a searching glance about him his eyes encountered a familiar form. He stepped forward with a smile. An old African stood a few feet away, a tall silk hat in one hand, and a yellow silk bandana in the other.

"Hello, Uncle Tom! It seems good to see you again." Mr. Grannell clasped the sable hand warmly. "How are all at home?"

"Dey's all well; thankee, suh! But, Mistah Edgah, I can't hahdly speak to you; I's so busy thankin' de Lawd foh bringin' you safe home. I nebah 'spect to see you no mo'! Rich done cried so much when she heah you's sick, dat she done wore troughs clean down from huh eyes to de bottom ob huh chin."

"Poor old Mammy!"

Edgar Grannell entered the carriage, Uncle Tom closed the door, and, clambering to the driver's box, he cracked the whip, and away they sped to the Grannell mansion. Arriving there, the driveway gate flew open, as if by magic, and with a grand flourish, which made Uncle Tom feel like he was in his teens, he brought the "chestnuts" to an impatient halt before the broad piazza.

"You haven't forgotten how to manage horses, Uncle Tom," smiled Mr. Grannell, as he left the carriage, and ascended the marble steps to the porch.

"No, suh; no, suh; I ain' fo'got nothin' since you lef' huh, suh! But dey's mighty lively dese days. All de time thinking 'bout play, nothin' but play, like two kittens."

The hall door suddenly was flung open, and out sprang a slender girl with violet eyes and black hair. Her sweet, refined face was all aglow with gladness as she threw herself into Mr. Grannell's out-stretched arms, and lifted her pursed lips for a kiss. But she immediately hid her face in his bosom and sobbed:

"O Uncle Edgar!"

As he held her close, her delicate form was convulsed with weeping.

"My poor little Anna!" he answered pityingly; as a tear stole down his face, and fell among her dark locks.

Three months previous to this Anna's mother was carried from this beautiful home and placed beneath the sod. Anna was almost crushed by her sorrow. She now had neither father, mother, sister nor brother; but for this kind, loving uncle, she would be desolate indeed.

Six months before Edgar Grannell sailed for Havana his only brother died, leaving Anna and her mother in straightened circumstances. Edgar at once brought them to his home, where they were surrounded with every luxury. But Mrs. Grannell was frail; the shock of losing her husband was too much for her. Elegant surroundings could not avail to keep her tired spirit pent within its house of clay, and it flew away in search of fairer climes.

Mr. Grannell wiped the tears from Anna's face with his handkerchief.

"Come, dear, cheer up now. Let's think of other things. We are all that is left of the Grannells. We must live for each other. I shall always be a bachelor, and you must not leave me. When you marry, you must bring your husband here and live with your gouty old uncle."

"Why Uncle, I can't imagine you ever old and gouty," smiled Anna, through her tears. "You are handsome as Apollo, and you look young enough to be my sweetheart."

Mr. Grannell put his arm about his niece, led her into the hall and began to ascend the stairs.

"Where are you taking me, Uncle?"

"I'm going to my bathroom, to rid myself of this dust. I wish you to go to yours, and wash away those tear stains. Then go to the library and wait for me. We'll have time for a walk before breakfast."

"Mistah Edgah, has you done fohgot ol' Rich?" came a plaintive voice from below.

Mr. Grannell paused and looked back.

"Why, there's my black mammy. Forgotten her? No indeed!" He left Anna on the stairs, and, turning, retraced his steps. "I'm glad to see you, Mammy. How are you?" He patted Aunt Rich's fat shoulder, as he shook her hand. "Are you well?"

"Yes, suh; thankee, suh!

"Mistah Edgah, you done writ to Miss Anna dat you miss yo' ol' mammy when you's sick. Did you, shoah 'nough, honey?"

"I did, Mammy, I wished for you every day."

Aunt Rich took up the corner of her apron, and wiped her eyes. "Honey, is n' I nebah gwine to git to kiss my manchil' no mo'?"

Mr. Grannell bent his head, and the devoted sable lips

brushed his forehead and cheek. "Bless God; my man-chil' done come home once mo'," she murmured, as she hobbled back to the kitchen.

Uncle Tom and Aunt Rich were born in the Grannell family. They had been the property of Edgar's father. Aunt Rich was Edgar's nurse. He could remember when no pillow was as soft as mammy's arm, and no voice could sing as sweet. After the emancipation the negroes chose to remain with their own white folks, as they termed the Grannell's.

Mr. Grannell found Anna waiting for him in the hall, when he descended, a half-hour later. She linked her arm through his, and, chattering blithely, led him out upon the lawn, around the house, through the garden and the grounds; showing him all that was new, even to a larva's nest, which she had refused to let Uncle Tom burn.

When the call to breakfast came she exclaimed, with a catch of the breath.

"Oh — I must tell you something else before we go into the house! . . . You remember I wrote you about my music teacher, who was with us when mamma died?"

"Yes."

"You know I wrote you that mamma requested this lady to remain with me until your return."

"Yes."

"Well, you will meet her at breakfast. I know you will like her. Mamma admired her so much. I just love her."

"What is her name?"

"Mrs. Kahree."

"Miss Kahree?"

"No, not miss; she's a widow, but she's not old. She's about your age. No — she's younger than you are, I think."

The thick Turkish carpet gave back no sound as Mr. Grannell and Anna walked down the hall and entered the dining-room.

Suddenly Edgar Grannell stopped short. There by the open casement, the soft breezes stirring her robes, stood his long lost Eurydice. The side of her face was turned to him. She was watching a little boy and girl playing with a foot-ball in the adjoining grounds.

"Mrs. Kahree," said Anna.

Gwin turned. A puzzled look came into her eyes as they met Mr. Grannell's face.

"Permit me to present my Uncle Edgar. Uncle, this is my friend and teacher, Mrs. Kahree."

Mr. Grannell bowed low, advanced, and their hands met.

"You have placed me under deep obligations to you, Mrs. Kahree, in having bestowed upon Anna your sympathy and protection in her bereaved and lonely condition. I sincerely thank you, both for myself, and in behalf of those who have passed beyond the power to utter their thanks."

"I hope you will never refer to the matter again as an obligation," answered Mrs. Kahree. "It has been no sacrifice for me to remain in this splendid home; on the other hand, I have enjoyed it, and the knowledge that I have been a protection and solace to Anna, makes me happy."

The trio moved toward the breakfast table, and took their seats. Mrs. Kahree behind the coffee urn, Anna at her right, and Mr. Grannel at her left.

"The gods are propitious, after all," thought Mr. Grannell, with a furtive smile. "This suits me precisely."

When breakfast was over, Anna took her uncle by the arm and hurried him away. He had been gone so long, and there were so many things about which to consult him.

Mrs. Kahree went to her room, and began preparations to return to Mrs. Danks'. She had been in the Grannell home four months. Her stay had been saddened by the death of her friend, Mrs. Grannell. Otherwise, it had been very pleasant. It was so much like the homes she had been accustomed to that the thought of leaving it and going back to a boarding house brought a deep sigh. She was busy removing the contents of her dressing-case to her trunk, when Anna knocked at her door.

"Oh, what are you doing?" Anna cried, as she entered the room. "You are not going to leave me, Mrs. Kahree? I can not live in this great house without you. I have been talking to Uncle about it. He sent me to beg you to come to the library; he would like to arrange with you to remain here awhile."

"Well, Anna, if my presence will add a ray of sunshine to your life I will remain."

They descended to the library, where Mr. Grannell awaited them.

It was soon arranged that Mrs. Kahree was to give up all her pupils, except Anna, and remain in the Grannell home a few months. Mr. Grannell named a salary which was so liberal that Gwin refused to accept it, and he was obliged to cut it down.

When Mrs. Kahree arose, to withdraw from the room, both Mr. Grannell and Anna requested her to remain, as they were to make that a holiday. Mr. Grannell said he would not go to his office until the following day. So they spent the time until lunch getting better acquainted.

Mr. Grannell observed in Mrs. Kahree a tendency to parry reference to herself and the past. More than once he caught her eyes fixed upon him with a far-away questioning

expression, as if her mind was groping in the past for a dim thread. His features seemed strangely familiar to her. It vexed her that she could not remember where she had seen him. She could scarcely prevent herself from gazing at him.

After lunch they took a long drive into the country.

Uncle Tom and a footman were upon the box, in brand new livery, with shining silver buttons, and nobby silk hats, which Mr. Grannell had ordered that morning.

The "chestnuts" were slick as moles. The way they bowed their necks and traveled, accorded with Tom's notions of the fitness of things precisely.

The sky was slightly overcast; but now and then the sun burst forth in a golden flood. Nature was radiant and triumphant in rich fructescence and aflame with garish color. Her little people of the wood were busy, each in his own small way, as men at commercial marts. Myriads of honey bees hung over clover blossoms, singing a union-labor song, and filling their wings with sweetness. Bright eyed squirrels scurried across the road, up trees, and from limb to limb, gathering their winter stores. Here and there a woodpecker hammered as laboriously, to secure his tidbit, as does the village blacksmith, to earn his. Ringdoves cooed, blackbirds called from tree to tree, while anon, gushes of trilling melody fell on the air — —for the miniature world has its artists, as well as its artificers, and they were giving a matinée.

How Gwin enjoyed it all! Her keen appreciation inclined her to reticence. So she permitted Anna and Mr. Grannell to do most of the talking.

After a time they came to a nook gorgeous in flaming sumac, bittersweet and woodbine. A tiny brook trailed through it, and the grass was embroidered with bright leaves.

Mr. Grannell called a halt, and they left the carriage and wandered awhile.

They returned, each with a handful of trophies which had cost Mr. Grannell snagged trousers, and scratched patent leathers. But what an afternoon that was to him! and Gwin began to feel as if she had known him all her life.

They arrived home at six o'clock with fine appetites, declaring that they had had the time of their lives.

After dinner they went to an east porch. A wealth of monthly roses, upon which the distilling dew lay heavy, was at that side of the house. The air was warm and full of perfume, and the moon was climbing a crystalline sky.

Anna began at once to question her uncle about his travels, thus leading him to relate some pleasing incidents. But soon he wearied of that, and broke out:

"I am hungry for music to-night. No doubt it is selfish for me to mention it. For I know Mrs. Kahree is tired."

Gwin rose immediately, and turned into the house, and Mr. Grannell and Anna followed her.

"You need not hesitate to ask me to play for you, whether I am tired or rested, sad or glad," she smiled back over her shoulder, as she sat down at the piano: "I am always ready. It rests me — carries me away from my petty self."

"Music must amount to a passion with you, as it does with me," he answered.

"Yes; I revel in it."

She was soon proving the statement.

For awhile she improvised dreamily. Then she wandered into Tannhäuser.

The grand-piano stood in the center of the room, and Mr. Grannell sat where he could see the play of psychic lights

which swept her face, from time to time, under the inspiration of the spirit of the great composer.

He recalled her face as he had studied it that day on the train months ago.

It was changed — not any older, but the agonized expression was gone; in its stead was something like resignation. How it had haunted him! — thrilled him, at times, with a sensation akin to pain. Illumined, as it now was, he thought it the most attractive face he ever had seen. Not perfect in features, but wonderful in expressiveness, and in a "subtle power to reveal intelligent reciprocation."

What was the grief that was weighing her down that day? he wondered. It was no ordinary sorrow. Perhaps her husband had just died.

But no; she did not wear black, he remembered that. She wore brown — dress, hat, veil, gloves and shoes. He had followed too many brown suits for a glimpse of a face since to forget how she was dressed.

"Thank you," smiled Mr. Grannell, when Mrs. Kahree arose from the piano. "I shall trouble you often."

"Uncle, you must play now; Mrs. Kahree, he plays beautifully."

"Mr. Grannell, will you favor us?"

Mr. Grannell arose, went to the piano, sat down, struck the prelude to the "Solo, profugo," from Martha, and began to sing. . . . Such a voice — a marvel of sweetness and range and its culture was perfect.

When he finished and turned, she was leaning forward with hands tightly clasped, and an expression of countenance which told him of her high appreciation.

The next morning, after Mr. Grannell had gone to his office, Anna and Mrs. Kahree sat upon a bench in the garden

together. Soon Anna began to talk about that which was uppermost in her mind — "Uncle Edgar. Poor dear!" she bemoaned, "he will never marry. His heart was broken, years ago. I am to live here always. When I marry, my husband and I are to take care of him when he gets old. That's what Uncle says, and I know he means it."

Then followed the pathetic story of Roxey. How he had worshipped her, and how, even yet, though it had been eight years since she died, none of the family had courage to mention her name to him."

"I don't remember her. I was only seven years old then. I never heard him allude to the subject. Mamma told me about it. But fidelity is characteristic of the Grannells. So we have looked upon Uncle Edgar as a confirmed bachelor — ever since. We feel as sure that he will never marry as if he already had died a bachelor."

Days glided into weeks—weeks into months; sweet days they were, and to Gwin time seemed to fly with a velocity long unknown. Peace and contentment reigned supreme in the Grannell home, and the hearts of this trio were daily becoming more closely united. The heart of one — all unconsciously to itself — was being stolen. The image which was enshrining itself in her soul's sanctum had crept in so stealthily that, not realizing her danger, she had made no effort to resist. She believed the ever present consciousness that she was bound to another rendered her heart invulnerable. She thought Mr. Grannell could never love again. His heart was buried with Roxey. If he could love a second time, he would not be heart-free now; for he had been associated with many of the most beautiful women in the world since Roxey's death.

Thus philosophizing, Gwin blinded her own eyes. It surprised her that life was now so sweet.

"I did not think it possible," she mused, "that the world could ever appear so fair to me again. It is because I am busy and feel myself essential to the happiness of this family. Anna, poor child, would be wretched without me and I think Mr. Grannell is happier because I am here. We enjoy each other's music so much. What a pleasing character he is."

CHAPTER XIII

THUS the winter was ushered in, with its long, pleasant evenings in the library and the music room, and its clear starry nights, during which naked shrubs and trees were incrusted with crystalline splendor, and window panes were frosted. It is true, Boreas' hoarse voice sometimes roared and shrieked; but it made music for those luxuriously sheltered; and there followed crisp, invigorating mornings.

One evening Anna had gone for a little visit, and six o'clock found Mr. Grannell and Mrs. Kahree seated at the dinner table alone together. Indoors, all was bright and cheerful; without, the wind whistled shrilly.

As she poured the coffee and lifted her eyes, to pass Mr. Grannell a cup, she caught his gaze fixed upon her. Something in his eyes caused the hot blood to sweep over her face. Her hand trembled, and the coffee slopped into the saucer. With a guilty look she drew it back, and gave him another saucer.

"It can not be," she thought, "it was my imagination. But what revelation is this that my fluttering heart is forcing upon me? I thought myself above this. Can it be that I really love him? Yes! yes, oh, fool that I am! to have stumbled into this! But he doesn't care for me — in that way — and I am glad he doesn't. It could only end in misery for us both. I will overcome this foolishness; I did not think I was so weak."

In response to her recognition of Edgar Grannell's splendid character a subtle reaction from her past dis-

appointments had, for some time, been effervescing in Mrs. Kahree's mind. Now all the ardor and full trust of her fine nature was ready to reveal itself in this new born affection. But instead of pandering to it she was putting the question to her heart as to whether or not her affection for Edgar Grannell had reached a stage which would render her strength insufficient to master it.

The answer came with peculiar clearness, but she refused to hear it, and resolved relentlessly to crush the life from this pure offspring of nature; and to listen to no voice, however sweet, but that of duty. Yet, in the midst of her inexorable decree, her willful inner self defied her in language so forcible as to make her tremble for her heroic resolution.

Gwin felt embarassed in Mr. Grannell's presence for the first time. She spoke of Anna — of how quiet and lonely the house seemed without her and she vouchsafed a commonplace remark, now and then, about the wind, the rain, and the possibility of its turning to snow.

Mr. Grannell's replies were laconic, and Gwin was obliged to exert herself, to keep up a sort of conversation. She was not exactly in a talking mood, but, somehow, she feared the silence. Though she scarcely knew why. It was a relief when dinner was over.

They arose from the table, Mr. Grannell preceded Gwin to the door, and opened it for her to pass out. He expected her to go to the library, as usual. In the hall she bade him good night, and went upstairs to her room. Entering it, she sat down, and again surveyed the situation.

Despite the fact that her forceful sense of justice and right was inducing a denial of the evidence of her own eyes, her perverse other self — inspired by the language which

his eyes had spoken — was vibrating as if with exquisite harmonies.

While she was bringing every argument to bear, to persuade herself that Mr. Grannell could not possibly care for her, except as a friend, the fingers of her right hand were drumming an accompaniment upon the back of her left hand to a psychic song — a song sweet and joyous. When she discovered it, the effect was dynamic:

She sprang to her feet, went to a window, and stood for awhile with her forehead pressed to the cool glass, looking into the opalescent light of the storm-swept street. She determined to put the matter from her mind.

A servant knocked at her door, and gave her a scrap of paper. She unfolded it and read:

"'Mrs. Kahree:

Will you kindly come to the library a few minutes? I wish to speak to you.

Edgar.'"

With the note in her hand, she descended to the library and knocked at the door.

Mr. Grannell opened it, bowed, and silently motioned her to a chair.

She sat down and waited, winding the note over one finger, then over another.

He seemed to be in deep thought. With folded arms, he walked back and forth through the room several times.

"He behaves strangely," she cogitated. "What if I read correctly, after all? But no!" Gwin's foot patted the carpet emphatically. She felt indignant that her mind had suggested the idea again.

Finally, Mr. Grannell paused, drew a chair and sat down opposite her. He looked pale, and her mental comment was: "Something is troubling him and he's going to tell me about it. He remarked to me yesterday that the stress and strain of politics was especially nerve racking just now."

Suddenly Mr. Grannell leaned forward and placed a hand over each of hers.

"Mrs. Kahree, I love you — love you with all my soul. Will you be my wife?"

She threw his hands off, and flushed scarlet:

"Hush! for Heaven's sake! I am already a wife."

Edgar Grannell's face reddened, then grew pale, and his eyes flashed wrathfully:

"Why did you not tell me this months ago?"

Both arose to their feet.

"I had a right to know this. Why have you kept me in ignorance?"

"Because I failed to recognize your right to enlightenment. I could not foresee this. I did not think it could make any possible difference to you whether I was married or single; — and you did not ask me. If you had, I could have made no explanation — I can make none now. All I can say is, that the man I once loved — still love, in a way, is gone— never to return to me. But my conscience is clear. I never intentionally wronged him, neither have I intentionally wronged you."

They stood an impressive minute silently looking into each other's eyes — each heart beating wildly — each spirit transfixed before the gaze of the other.

"May I ask you one question?" inquired Mr. Grannell.

"As many as you wish."

"Are you the wife of Judge A. J. Kahree, of Kansas City?"

"Yes."

Gwin turned toward the door and paused with a hand upon the knob. There was anguish depicted in those two faces. Gwin turned hers away, that he might not read it, and he believed himself the only sufferer.

As Gwin stood there, her mind ran backward over her months of association with Mr. Grannell, and she began to realize that her manner toward him had been encouraging. How was he to know that it was owing to her blindness, and to her conviction that the sorrows of the past had fortified them both against danger? He blamed her — that was evident. It was excruciating to think that she had descended a degree in his esteem.

"Mr. Grannell." Her voice was faint and tremulous. She scarcely knew why she had uttered his name, not because she had any thing of importance to communicate, she could say nothing to mend matters. But she dreaded to leave him in this state of mind. "I will return to the boarding house early to-morrow," she finished, not being able, in her confusion, to find anything else to say.

There was a sarcastic ring in his voice as he replied:

"Your idea is profoundly philosophical. You proceed to lock the stable since the horse is stolen."

She turned half around and gazed at him in amazement. This was so unlike him.

He continued in the same withering tone:

"You are a woman of superior intelligence. We have lived under the same roof for months. Yet you have failed to discover that I have been worshiping you every minute

of the time. Do you think your going away now will relieve the situation?''

Gwin turned to the door again, to hide the grieved expression in her face.

''This may seem a trivial matter to you — blasting the spring of hope in the heart of a fellow being,'' he went on mercilessly. . . . ''Yes — go! and carry with you the knowledge that one who believed you innocent as an angel of light carries a wound inflicted by you — a most cruel one.''

His words cut her to the quick. She wheeled, and, opening her eyes, now full of strange opal lights, she looked him steadily in the face. A sweep of dignity lifted her chin and brought her to her full height, while a proud expression of conscious innocence spoke from every feature of her countenance.

''Mr. Grannell, I never suspected, until this minute, that you were capable of injustice and unkindness. I thought that of all men you would be the last to misjudge me.''

Gwin's emotions overcame her. She sank to a chair, and covered her face with her hands.

He stood gazing down upon her, his arms folded, his eyes flashing, and his proud lips wreathed with a smile of scorn; yet noble in appearance as a Greek god. The thought that he, Edgar Grannell, who prided himself upon his stainless record and pure principles, had for years been carrying in his heart the image of another man's wife exasperated him. The consciousness that the image was indelibly stamped there was quite beyond endurance. Like his father, Adam, he was trying to make the woman shoulder the blame.

He had been obliged to listen to too many disgraceful divorce tirades in court to have much respect for the average

divorcee. He was especially prejudiced against young "grass-widows," and inclined to view them as adventuresses.

He had been so wrought up he failed to consider that Mrs. Kahree's methods were diametrically opposed to those of that class, in every respect; and that it was the splendor in her that caused her reserve and fine reticence toward him upon a subject which a woman of a coarser nature unhesitatingly would have communicated to him. His astute mind soon reached the discriminating point, however. The angry light left his eyes, the scorn fled from his lips, and, heartsick, he began to pace the floor again.

Again Mrs. Kahree rose to leave the room.

Mr. Grannell swung around and paused. This woman whom he had intended to keep near him always; of whom he had dreamed for months and years; whom, although another man's wife, he loved devotedly, and whom he had long looked upon almost as his betrothed; was about to leave the shelter of his roof forever. While his heart strings seemed strained to the point of snapping, he had no wish to prolong the interview, nor to continue her acquaintance.

She now stood before him in calm defiance. She had no apologies to offer; and if his respect for her depended upon her telling him her story, and disclosing Judge Kahree's sins, then he would have to go on thinking of her as he now did. She would not injure the man she once called husband, even to justify herself with the one she loved best.

There was no effeminacy in Edgar Grannell's nature. He was strong, mentally and physically, but as he stood gazing into her face, with those wonderful eyes looking into his, he felt the tension of his nerves relaxing; his wildly beating heart growing calm, while a reposeful feeling stole over him — a sort of mesmeric sensation, he thought.

"Good night, Mr. Grannell," said a voice that sounded far away, and with a cool bow, Mrs. Kahree swept from his presence.

Edgar Grannell passed his hand over his brow. He felt half dazed.

"What a power of invincible fascination that woman possesses," he mused. "I am inclined to believe it partly hypnotic. But why has fate again imposed this suffering upon me? If I can not have her, why could I not have lived my life without meeting her?"

Gwin had no knowledge of hypnotism. Mr. Grannell's imagination was playing him a trick. It is said,

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact."

"His fancy made pictures which were not." He thought she had little feeling for his suffering and was inclined to treat it lightly; and the peculiar state of his mind at the moment when their eyes met, as both supposed, for the last time; when all the strength of her intense nature was shining in her face; and she was rapt in that absorbing flame which he had kindled; which he saw and felt; but did not understand; this, with her magnetic personality, set in motion a force overwhelming to both; and Mr. Grannell was in a state of mind to be anything but reasonable. He jumped at conclusions; thought her cold and cruel, and imputed her agitation to mere embarrassment. But, silent to the last, she heroicly turned away, and with a heart breaking for his woes as well as for her own, she left him.

Mrs. Kahree expected to leave Mr. Grannell's house the next morning as soon as it was light. She packed her trunk

before retiring. She arose at daybreak and dressed herself. When she opened her room door, she found the following note: —

"Mrs. Kahree:

"Please remain here a few days until I dispose of Anna. I purpose leaving the city soon.

"Edgar."

So she must meet him again.

"Well," she whispered, "one more of life's discomfits — a small one this time."

She turned into her room, closed the door, sat down before a window with her elbows upon the sill, her fingers interlaced and tightly clasped, and she sat thus until the call to breakfast came.

As she started to breakfast she met Anna in the hall. They went down stairs and entered the dining room together.

Mr. Grannell came in just behind them.

As they sat down at the table Anna looked at one, then at the other.

"Well, what has happened to uncle and Mrs. Kahree? You both look as if you had been sick a month. If you had walked the floor all night, you wouldn't look more like ghosts. What have you two been doing? I shall not go away again and leave you alone together."

The housekeeper, Mrs. Sims, who was passing through the room, turned and gazed at the couple curiously.

"They've quarreled," was her mental comment; "he's dead in love with her, that's plain as a toadstool on a stump."

The pallor instantly left the two faces under scrutiny, and both grew very red as they felt the weight of Mrs. Sims' eyes.

Anna looked innocent, but she was laughing in her sleeve. She thought, like Mrs. Sims, that they had had some little misunderstanding which would soon be corrected.

Mr. Grannell was made glad at the moment by the discovery that no napkin was at his plate, which permitted him to change the subject, and administer a gentle reproof to Mrs. Sims. He told her he hoped she would look after the servants a little closer and not let things like that occur.

Some time in the afternoon he summoned Anna to the library, and told her that he was going to Europe, and that he purposed placing her in a boarding school, and closing the house; leaving Mrs. Sims to look after the servants and care for things.

This was a shock to Anna, for she was a home lover. But, for her uncle's sake, she strove to be brave — in his presence.

As soon as he left the house, she ran up to Mrs. Kahree's room, threw herself on her knees, and, burying her face in her friend's lap, she took a real girl-cry.

After a few minutes she lifted her face, and brushed away the tears.

"I feel better now. I will try to bear this cheerfully for poor uncle's sake. . . . Mrs. Kahree, what's the matter with him?"

Gwin scarcely knew what reply to make.

"Don't ask me, dear;" she answered, after a little hesitation; "I can not tell you."

Anna's eyes rested upon her friend's face scrutinizingly a moment; but she said no more.

In a few days the Grannell home was closed, and this loving trio separated by hundreds of miles. One was tossing on the ocean, each moment widening the distance between him and native land. The other two, separated, also, heart sick-

and home sick, knelt each night and prayed for the beloved wanderer and for each other. In the petition of one the name of another wanderer was tearfully whispered, and Heaven's choicest blessings were supplicated for him.

CHAPTER XIV

ONE day, several month's after Mrs. Kahree's return to her boarding house, John appeared at the door of her room, and handed her a card. It bore a name unfamiliar to her. She went down stairs immediately. As she entered the parlor, an elderly man arose.

"Is this Mrs. Gwin Vauce Kahree?"

"Yes."

"I am attorney in a divorce suit for Judge A. J. Kahree, against Mrs. Gwin Vauce Kahree."

Gwin was so surprised and shocked that she felt faint. She put out a hand to the back of a chair, to steady herself.

The lawyer took a document from his pocket, which he proceeded to read to her. It was a notice of Judge Kahree's application for divorce. He also had a letter from the judge, offering her liberal alimony, which she refused.

"Well!" exclaimed the attorney, looking at her in wonder, "you are an exceptional woman. It is not common for them to refuse the money, let the provocation be what it will; in fact, this is an amazing innovation, the first case of the kind I ever had."

"Judge Kahree is generous and noble-hearted; it is like him to make this offer; but I can not accept it; I have no claim on him or his money."

"Then you will not appear against him?"

"No; I have no evidence to offer against him. His charge against me, that of desertion, is just; but I ask for no divorce,

and shall remain true to him, until death severs the tie which binds us.''

The attorney continued to stare at Mrs. Kahree. Presently a quizzical expression crossed his face.

''Doesn't it sound a little paradoxical that you deserted a man of whom you entertain so exalted an opinion?''

''Perhaps,'' was the unsatisfactory reply.

''The judge tells me he is to be married, as soon as he secures a divorce,'' said the lawyer. He saw a look of pain cross Mrs. Kahree's face.

''Oh,'' she cried out, ''it can not be! Isn't there some mistake?''

''Read for yourself, Madam,'' and he handed her Judge Kahree's letter.

She read it and returned it to him without comment.

''Inasmuch as you do not want the judge yourself, I am at a loss to understand why you object to letting some other woman have him?'' smiled the lawyer.

''I think I may assume that both Judge Kahree and I are endowed with average intelligence. To us a vow is sacred. We took our marriage vows solemnly and understandingly. We took each other for better or for worse. If we have found it for worse, does high principle offer us recourse?''

''I suppose you are a Roman Catholic, and by high principle you mean religious dogma?'' smiled the lawyer.

''No, I am not a Roman Catholic, but a vow means something to me.''

''I beg pardon, madam, but shall an individual because he has unfortunately formed a mesalliance, — been duped and deceived into loving that which, too late, he learns is unlovable, — be doomed to a life without love? I think the

individual conscience should be supreme dictator in the matter.''

''Suppose the individual has no conscience. Conscience is not innate. It is taught principle. But it is useless for you and me to discuss the subject,'' said Gwin, turning to leave his presence.

''Yes; I think it is,'' he assented. ''I am glad those old straight-jacket notions have been relegated to the past. I don't envy you all the pleasure you will get out of life, if you continue to adhere to your present principles,'' he laughed back, as he bowed himself out of the room.

CHAPTER XV

ON a dark, foggy morning, in London, two men, hurrying along Bond street in opposite directions, collided. Neither was seriously injured, however. Each begged pardon. Instantly, their hands met in a warm clasp and they spoke simultaneously.

"Edgar Grannell."

"Arrel Kahree."

"What a delightful surprise!" exclaimed the judge.

"Superlatively so!" declared Mr. Grannell. "But it didn't lack much of being a tragedy. Happily, it ended in comedy. I shall never forget the expression on your face — with your hat knocked awry — when you recognized me," he laughed. "No doubt my appearance was equally amusing."

"I don't know. I was too amazed to see the funny side of it. But, come, let's find shelter from the dampness. The fog is turning to a drizzle, and the wind cuts. My hotel is but a block away."

The judge linked his arm through that of his friend, and turned back up the street. Soon they were comfortably ensconced before a bright fire.

"Edgar, I am so glad to see you — I can scarcely express my delight. When did you arrive?"

"Two days ago."

"When did you leave home?"

"One year ago."

"Indeed! I took a flying trip to the United States last May."

"You purpose making London your permanent home, then?" inquired Mr. Grannell.

"Yes; all my interests are now transferred; I presume I shall remain here."

Mr. Grannell would have enjoyed hearing his friend speak further of personal matters. But the judge changed the subject.

"The United States has some serious questions confronting her to-day. There is the Trust, with its powerful corruption fund, the Mormon question, the labor question, the Negro question, the public school question, the divorce question."

"Yes; those are grave questions. Each will have a mighty bearing on human progress," answered Mr. Grannell. "I am an optimist through and through. But the fear sometimes crosses my mind that Lord Macauley's prediction will yet overtake our nation. You remember he said, 'Either some Cæsar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman empire was in the fifth, with this difference: that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country, and by your own institutions.'"

At this moment a door leading to an adjoining room was softly opened, and there appeared upon the threshold one of the handsomest women Mr. Grannell had ever beheld.

She evidently was surprised that Judge Kahree was not alone. With a slight bow, she stepped back and gently closed the door. Mr. Grannell glanced at the judge, who sat thoughtfully gazing into the fire and had not observed her. Who

could she be? and what was she doing in his suite of rooms?

"There is nothing impossible in that prediction," admitted the judge. "In each of those questions is involved a crisis if they are not handled judiciously.

"Are you married, Edgar?"

"No; and it isn't likely I ever shall be."

"You haven't learned, then, that

'Of all the tyrants that the world affords
Our own affections are the fiercest lords'."

"Well, — yes; — " smiled Mr. Grannell. "To be honest, Arrel, I have. I learned that young. Death robbed me once. I had a second experience a year ago. . . . . With a grass-widow," he added after a minute, with a laugh.

Judge Kahree smiled.

"A grass-widow?"

"A grass-widow," repeated Mr. Grannell.

Here the clock struck one, and a couple of servants came in with luncheon.

Soon the judge and Mr. Grannell were seated at the table. As they ate, they conversed upon various topics. But that of the grass-widow was not again alluded to.

"How long do you purpose remaining in London?" enquired the judge, as Mr. Grannell arose to conclude his visit.

"It is uncertain. I am here on a business commission of a political character. I have partially transacted it. I can complete it in a few hours. So it is optional with me how long I tarry.

"That's good. We will consider the hour of your departure indefinitely postponed, then. We shall expect you to

dine with us to-morrow, and remember you must be a daily visitor here.

Mr. Grannell thanked the judge and bade him good-evening, wondering if "we" would include the charming woman of whom he had a glimpse.

"Arrel is a good fellow," he mused, as he wended his way back to his hotel. "I wonder what could have been the trouble?"

The next day was more dark and dismal than ever.

At five o'clock, Mr. Grannell arrived at Judge Kahree's hotel. The judge met him with a cordial hand clasp, and again they seated themselves before a cheerful fire.

They talked of old friends; old times; old associations; politics — home and foreign. Each told the other of his financial prospects. The judge again incidentally referred to his recent trip to the United States.

"I wonder what could have taken him back?" thought Mr. Grannell. "I wonder if he went to see her? It seems to me they were well mated. What could have been the trouble? He is a fine fellow; intelligent, honorable, handsome, rich and generous. I can not understand it."

When dinner was announced, Judge Kahree arose and knocked at the door behind which the beautiful vision of the day before had disappeared. It was opened immediately, and she stood before them.

"Mrs. Kahree, this is my friend, the Honorable Edgar Grannell, of St. Louis, Missouri; Mrs. Kahree, Mr. Grannell."

Edgar Grannell was dumb with astonishment for a few seconds. He never before had had a hint that Judge Kahree was divorced.

"Why — why — Judge — this is most surprising!" he

stammered; "how long since you assumed this happy responsibility?"

"Six months, I think; isn't it?" he inquired of Rose, who colored, as she assented with a slight inclination of the head, at the same time she gave Mr. Grannell her hand.

"How exquisite she is!" thought Mr. Grannell. "No doubt he will be happy this time." Then he recalled Gwin's words: 'The man I once loved — still love in a way.' "It's too much for me," he breathed with a sigh, as he and the judge followed Mrs. Kahree to the elevator.

The dinner was served in the public dining-room. While the viands were all a connoisseur could ask, Mr. Grannell ate little. The knowledge he had just gained was too much for his appetite. The woman he loved was no longer another man's wife. During the remainder of the evening, he was so preoccupied mentally with his own affairs that he had some difficulty in keeping up his end of the conversation. He took his departure early, glad to be alone with his own thoughts and plans.

The fog was settling, and a full moon was pouring a stream of argent lights into the mists that hung over the Thames as he walked back to his hotel, which was but a few blocks from that occupied by the Kahrees. What a change supreme was in the face and the song of nature since he passed this way a few hours before. Then, he was listening to a voice which spoke of cold realities. Now, he was dreaming of possibilities in the near future which might fructify into a fullness of all his hopes.

Mr. Grannell found it impossible to close his eyes in slumber that night, until after midnight, and morning's earliest sparrow found him awake. His first thought on waking, was of a home-bound steamer.

He learned, on investigation, that the vessel he wished to take would not sail for a fortnight. This was a long time for a man to be patient, under such circumstances.

He spent much time with Judge Kahree, and he could not help seeing that the relationship between the judge and his wife was not very close. It seemed to Mr. Grannell that they studiously avoided each other, and he could see that Judge Kahree's heart did not belong to Rose. Yet it was clear that she idolized him. She was so diffident in his presence that she trembled if he touched her, which he never seemed to do, except by accident — and she blushed at his slightest glance. Her beautiful velvety eyes, when turned upon him, seemed always pleading. Mr. Grannell observed that they occupied separate suites of rooms, and that they spent little time in each other's society. The judge, obviously, avoided allusion to his marriages; so, while the subject would have been highly entertaining to Mr. Grannell, under the circumstances, he refrained from reference to it. But there was sufficient suggestion of mystery in it to pique his curiosity.

The last day of the Honorable Edgar Grannell's stay in London had arrived. He was to sail for home the following morning. He had dined with the Kahrees, as usual, and he and the judge were seated alone together in their last colloquy.

Judge Kahree was Mr. Grannell's senior by several years, but they had known each other from Edgar's earliest recollection. They had drifted apart before the judge's marriage with Gwin and had not met since, until they met in London. Naturally, their minds reverted to the past, on this their last evening together. After an hour's desultory conversation, the judge remarked:

"My life — since I last saw you, Edgar — has been a

weary interval filled with vain hopes and crude joys. Now it is like a legend that is told in fantastic hieroglyphics."

"Why, Arrel, I don't understand. You are now, and always have seemed to be, one of the most happy, prosperous of men, a favorite of fortune — in every respect."

"Such may be my outward appearance, but I have failed utterly in all that is worth while. I started wrong, I had an idea, like many other young men, that it is not necessary for a man to be chaste. Of course an honorable man would be true to his marriage vow — so I shaped my course accordingly.

"After sowing a lot of wild oats, I married one of the sweetest girls that ever drew breath. I married her knowing that I was not and never could hope to become her ideal. But I deceived her into believing that I was. My insane love determined me to marry her and risk her ever learning the truth. She learned it sooner than I expected, in a way I little anticipated."

Mr. Grannell looked puzzled. "I don't quite understand yet, Arrel."

"I was her ideal physically and intellectually, but not morally."

"Yes, yes; I see!"

"She had become interested in the new attitude women are taking toward purity in the marital relation. She had set up a standard of virtue in her mind for the man she would marry. She was modest and womanly.

"Feeling enervated one sultry evening, I took one glass of wine too much and immediately set out to visit her. Soon after reaching her presence I proceeded to make a blundering remark which awoke me to a realization that I was slightly inebriated. For the remark elicited from her the question —

'Are you morally pure?' By evasion I gave her the impression that I was. . . . . I don't know why I am telling you this.''

Judge Kahree rose and took several turns through the room before he resumed. He little suspected how deeply his friend was moved by what he had said.

After several minutes he paused in front of Mr. Grannell. Then he rehearsed his sorrowful story once more.

''Those experiences were bitter,'' he added, ''but they made a radical change in me. I had been viewing society and social life through conventionalism's perspective. Society did not object. I was continually flattered and petted by women who assumed an ignorance they did not possess, and I knew it -- women who professed to be Christians — leaders in the Church.''

The judge turned and resumed his pace back and forth through the room.

For a long time Mr. Grannell sat buried in his own thoughts and reminiscences. At last he shook himself out.

''Judge, would you like to hear my story? Possibly you may find it not entirely uninteresting. Sit down, and I will relate it.''

The judge sat down with a listless air, and threw his feet upon a chair in front of him.

He had started in to tell Mr. Grannell the whole story up to date. But when his mind began to dwell in the terrible past, he lost himself completely, and forgot all about Rose.

Mr. Grannell began with a minute description of a lady he had met on an October morning, in the year 18——, on an east-bound train between Kansas City and St. Louis. He told of the strange fascination she possessed for him; the indelible impression she had left upon his mind; of his futile

efforts to shake it off and persuade himself that he was unwise to permit his mind to dwell upon one of whom he knew nothing.

By this time, the judge was all attention.

Mr. Grannell described his meeting with her at the church; his determination to learn who she was; and his failure to find her.

He told of his call to Havana; his return; his unexpected introduction to her in his own home; and how — believing her to be a widow — he fell in love with her.

The judge was upon his feet again, pacing the floor.

Mr. Grannell gave a graphic description of the scene in his library, of his declaration of love, and her repulsion of him, and how, in desperation, he had retaliated with angry sarcasm.

"This is why I am a wanderer to-day. The image of your wife has been standing between me and the sunlight of heaven. But now she is free and I am going home, to try to win her. I thought at one time I had her affection. I thought I read it in her face. But I was mistaken."

Judge Kahree turned and extended his hand to Mr. Grannell. He did not speak at once. When he did, his voice was husky.

"You are doomed to disappointment, my friend. She will never marry while my head is above the sod. She will never do it. Mark my words! I know whereof I speak."

Mr. Grannell changed color.

"Why not? She is free, isn't she?"

"From a legal view-point, yes; but she is opposed to second marriage until death or infidelity has cancelled the first contract."

Mr. Grannell was surprised at that remark.

"But your remarriage constitutes adultery, according to Bible teaching," he persisted, "and liberates her."

The judge shook his head slowly; but offered no explanation, and Mr. Grannell added nothing further.

Mr. Grannell consulted his watch, and arose.

"I must say good-bye, Arrel, it is past midnight."

The hands of the friends met, and for a minute they looked deep into each other's eyes.

"Good-bye, Edgar, and God bless you. If I could die tonight and leave her free I would do it. . . . . There is little to live for now, and you are the very man for her."

These words confirmed Mr. Grannell's opinion that Judge Kahree did not love Rose.

Mr. Grannell's return trip was stormy and tedious. He felt a thrill of pleasure when his feet again touched *terra firma* in his native land. His heart leaped within him at the thought of her to whom every hour was bringing him nearer and whom he felt that he now had a right to try to win.

Judge Kahree had given him a deeper insight into Gwin's character. He knew now that he had wronged her, that she was too true to trifle or deceive intentionally.

But how would she receive him? The judge's words often reiterated themselves in his mind: 'She will never marry while my head is above the sod; I know whereof I speak.'

"But she has kept her vow to the letter," reasoned Mr. Grannell, in soliloquy. "I believe that the law of God applies only to the guilty party, and, under the circumstances, she would be exempt. She can not be held responsible for the deception which was practiced on her; neither was she responsible for the divorce. According to the judge's own statement, he was the offending party all the way through. The laws of the land have annulled the marriage, and I believe

that, so far as she is concerned, divine law is repealed. If I can succeed in winning her affection, I think I can make her see it.''

Mr. Grannell trembled at the thought of what might be before him. Perhaps, having once loved and been so cruelly deceived, she had lost faith in man. He once believed there was no such thing as second love; he had thought his heart as impervious as stone; but it had revived, and, ''instead of losing, it had gained fire.'' If he could love twice, why could not she?

On a fine October evening, Mr. Grannell arrived at home. He partook of his dinner *en solitaire* with the relish which good health and an optimistic heart never fail to bestow. How delightful, after so long an absence, to find himself again basking in the glow of his own chandelier!

There followed an interval of mental rambling in a vaguely complex realm. Then he left the table, crossed the wide vista of hall, with its blue crystal dome ablaze with stars, each an electric light, and, crossing to a massive door — a replica of several others which opened into the hall — he turned the bronze knob and entered an oriental room furnished as if for an Asiatic prince. The highly polished floor was covered with a priceless Eastern rug, the walls tapestried; couches, tables, and windows, were draped with purple velvet embroidered with gold, and upon the long, massive, heavily carved mantle, were vases and cups of rare workmanship, and curios from far distant lands. Throwing himself into a tufted chair, Mr. Grannell lit a cigar of delicate fragrance, placed his feet upon a teak wood stool in front of him, and began pensively to puff.

Suddenly a rich soprano voice in song, accompanied by

his own piano, struck his ear. He sprang to an upright position and listened almost breathlessly:

" 'I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs at my side;
And of all who assembled within those walls
That I was the hope and the pride.
I had riches too great to count; could boast
Of a high, ancestral name;
But I also dreamt which pleased me most
That you loved me still the same;
That you loved me still the same.' "

Ah, that voice! It was the one voice which could stir him to the heart's core. He rose and crossed the hall to the music-room. She was singing the second verse. The door was ajar; he pushed it open slightly.

" 'That you loved me still the same:
That you loved me still the same'."

Who was in her mind as she sang? The trembling pathos in her voice assured Mr. Grannell that she was applying those lines to some one. Was it Judge Kahree. He was a man whom it would be hard for a woman to forget; and he still loved her that was clear.

After she had finished the song, she took up a photograph which Mr. Grannell now observed had stood upon the music rack in front of her:

"Dear one, queer thoughts, which seem to me like sacrilege, surge in my mind to-night. Does virtue forever lie in self-abnegation? It is madness, I know, but I love you! I love you!" and she kissed the picture twice.

"Ah! whose picture is that?" and this strong man of clear conception — statesman — diplomatist — does not suspect, but stands trembling before an imaginary shadow.

"Arrel's," he concluded. "I might have known it. She told me she loved him and he worships her."

Gwin switched off the light and left the room. A minute later, he heard the street door close behind her.

Not knowing of his return, she had gone to the Grannell home in answer to a request from Anna, who had written her that she was homesick. She asked for a box of flowers from the home conservatory.

A maid, who had answered Gwin's ring, said, as she opened the door to her:

"Mistah Edgah done come home."

Gwin understood her to say he was going to come. So she answered merely. "Is he?" and passed on.

After she had cut the flowers, and had ordered them packed and sent to Anna; as usual, when her heart was full to overflowing, she had sought the piano — his piano — which seemed to sing to her in mystic undertones.

Mr. Grannell felt his way to a switch, and turned on the light, then he turned to the picture, and lo! he stood face to face with his own handsome image.

He had practiced repressing the emotional side of his nature until he was absolute master of himself, when he chose. But he now made no effort at self-control. Joy was supreme, and he gave it full sway. He stood upon the spot where Gwin had just stood, his eyes aglow with mystic light, fine as empyrean fire. He opened his arms wide and clasped them together in fervid anticipation of holding her to his heart. "Ah, the time is near when she will be mine!" he whispered. With clenched hands, his arms straightened

themselves rigid at his sides and he walked the length of the room and back twice. Then, with smiling lips and relaxed tension, he returned to the Oriental room, took up the cigar he had abandoned at the sound of Gwin's voice, and again sat down in the tufted chair.

Deep midnight, brooding over the city, found him still in the Oriental room. No heaviness retarded the hours, for the bleak shadows of uncertainity were all alight with the flame of his ardor. But Edgar Grannell was yet to learn — to its fullest — how sweet pleasure is, after pain!

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEXT morning Mr. Grannell called at the home of Mrs. Danks, which was only a block from his home now. This was where she had moved soon after his experience at the church. She had risen to the dignity of mistress of a high class boarding house, in an aristocratic neighborhood.

A great radiance flashed into Mrs. Kahree's mind, when, in answer to a knock at the door of her studio, she opened it and found John there, bowing and scraping, with a silver tray in his hand upon which lay Edgar Grannell's card. She took the card, closed the door, and sank to a chair. Her heart beat wildly. It was several seconds before she could calmly descend to the parlor.

She found Mr. Grannell standing with his back to the door, examining an etching which hung upon the wall. He turned, when he heard her step, and came to meet her. He watched the color come and go in her face as he clasped her hand. It caused the smile on his lips to broaden to a grin.

She observed his satisfied expression, and that the lines of disappointment and sorrow which his face wore when last she saw him were all smoothed out. He looked almost boyish now, and there was an exultant light in his eyes. "Thank God," she thought, "he has conquered; it is all over." But she caught herself in the act of sighing, and a sick feeling was at her heart. . . . These hearts — how they deceive us! Verily, the spirit was willing, but the flesh — ah the flesh!

"I am delighted to meet you again, Mrs. Kahree," declared Mr. Grannell, refusing to be seated. "I have called

on a business errand. I have just received a letter from Anna's teacher. Anna is not at all well. I have telegraphed her to come home. She will arrive to-morrow. I came to ask you to do me the favor of coming to my house and staying while she remains."

Mrs. Kahree looked away and did not answer.

He resumed:

"It is cruel to allow Anna to stay there with no white person in the house, except the housekeeper and myself. You are her choice, above all others."

Still she was silent.

"You need not hesitate, because of the past. I wish to say, right here that I am sorry for my injustice and cruelty that night. Forgive me."

He was still holding her hand.

There was a hurt look in her clear eyes as they lifted and swept his face. She could detect nothing there but joy, joy, no sadness — no regret. She drew her hand from his. "He has ceased to love me, and learned to love another," she thought. But, she instantly chided herself. "Of what am I thinking? Would I have it otherwise? I — another man's wife?" Despite her brave thoughts, and heroic efforts, her heart ached.

"There is nothing to forgive," she asseverated faintly, taking a step away from him.

The tense expression on her face drove the smile from his lips.

"Mrs. Kahree, you will never know how the words I spoke to you that night have cut and lashed me."

"I am sorry; I hope you will never think of them again."

"But you haven't forgotten them."

"I haven't remembered a word you said that night, so far as holding it against you is concerned."

"Then, if you have forgiven me, you will not refuse me this favor. You are not looking as strong as when I left you. Can you not give up teaching for a couple of months?"

"No; I can't do that. But I will stay with Anna all my leisure time. I have a large class. I can be with her only at meal times and Sundays and evenings."

"Thank you; that will be better than not to have you at all," and Mr. Grannell hurried away.

Gwin limply sank to a chair. Scalding tears rose and insisted upon vent, but she determinedly winked them back.

"How can I go there again?" she murmured. "Why did I promise? Have I lost my judgment entirely — lost all control of myself?"

A burst of the old fire brought her to her feet.

"Well, we shall see!"

She passed into the hall and upstairs with firm tread and elevated chin.

The next evening brought Anna. As soon as she had greeted all at home, she hurried to Mrs. Danks' boarding house.

John admitted her, and conducted her to Mrs. Kahree's rooms.

"Dear Mrs. Kahree," she cried, throwing her arms about Gwin, "I am so glad to see you! and so happy to be at home again, and to know that we are to have you with us as of old."

"Thank you, Anna," and Gwin, returned the sweet girl's embrace. "How nice to have you home once more! We have been separated so long, and I have missed you sadly. The sound of your voice makes my heart light."

"Well, I have almost died with homesickness. When I got home, and Uncle told me you had agreed to come back to us, I couldn't wait. I was so afraid you might not come over till to-morrow. I want you to-night.

"It's five o'clock; dinner will be ready at six, you know. If your trunk isn't ready. I'll help you to pack it."

"It is ready, thank you, except for a few small articles."

"Uncle Edgar said he would send a servant for it in a little while."

"You have grown taller, Anna." "You are as tall as I am now. But you are thin and pale. Is it anything serious?"

"Not a thing but homesickness. I have been homesick every minute of the time since I left here. How good dear old St. Louis looks to me! I love the very earth it is planted on. I shall be all right now; this atmosphere will cure me.

"But—changing the subject—hasn't Uncle Edgar grown young and handsome, though? I accused him of having found a sweetheart somewhere in his rambles, and, bless you, he didn't deny it, and he blushed like a girl."

How like a dagger those words shot into Gwin's heart! She forced a little laugh, and bent over her trunk, to place in it those "few remaining articles" and lock it.

"It is well," she thought — "Just as it should be. God has sent me the remedy — I will take it and be thankful. The cure will come easy and be effectual when I must see the expression of his face daily as I saw it to-day. It evidently impressed Anna as it did me. I shall not need to mask my face. The contempt I feel for myself will do that."

Soon Gwin and Anna went downstairs and out into the yellow sunlight, which was shooting in under the trees now from the west. They passed slowly up the walk till they

reached the grounds at the Grannell home, when they stopped simultaneously and looked about them.

"Oh, this beautiful, beautiful home!" exclaimed Anna, clasping her hands. "Isn't it sweet and dear?"

"It is, indeed, a beautiful place," Gwin answered, feeling that to her, too, it was dear, for some of the happiest moments of her life had been spent there.

As they were removing their hats in the hall, Mr. Grannell met them with a hand extended to each. "How happy I am that my little family is reunited! Would that it might remain so through all the coming years."

"Dinner is served," announced the butler.

Mr. Grannell led Gwin to her old place at the head of his table, seated Anna, and took his accustomed seat with a heart overflowing with pleasure.

Mrs. Kahree was given no further demonstration of Mr. Grannell's exuberance. He was serenely satisfied, and thought it wise to let matters rest awhile. He attended closely to business, leaving Anna and Gwin to themselves a great deal. He was very busy and he had no cause to worry. Gwin's heart was his and he intended that she should be his indeed before long. Is it strange that he was cool and complacent? Most any man could endure a little deprivation under such circumstances.

A political campaign was on, and Mr. Grannell spent an evening or two away from home each week; something he never did when Gwin was there the first time. She wondered where he went and why? She could not prevent her mind each day from anticipating the evening, and wondering if he would join her and Anna after dinner. If he failed to do so, she felt uneasy and disappointed. After which she mentally lashed herself for a fool. But with it all, there was

sufficient pleasure to both in the privilege of seeing each other daily to make the weeks speed rapidly by. Before they could realize it two months had passed. Anna had regained her health and must return to school and Mrs. Kahree must go back to her boarding house.

Mr. Grannell sat in his office gazing into the street. He neither saw nor heard the hurrying throng. It had been a busy morning with him. As each successive client, following close upon the heels of another, came to relate his grievance, Mr. Grannell heartily wished them all in Halifax.

A good carpenter never has time to build himself a house, nor an expert tailor to make himself a coat; and now this lawyer has a case of his own—one of vital importance—and can not have a minute to think about it.

As an unusually tiresome client left his private office, Mr. Grannell locked the door, determined to admit no one else for awhile.

"What necessity is there for my returning to the old life?" he questioned. "The house will soon be like a tomb again. I love her; she loves me; she is free; the judge married; I need her; she needs me; I believe I can convince her now that it is right for her to marry me; I will state the case as I see it, and show her wherein she is exempt from responsibility in the matter — she being the innocent party. Then I will suggest that we have a quiet wedding this evening, before Anna goes, for she must go to-morrow. We can be married at the boarding house, with Anna, Mrs. Danks and a couple of my male friends to witness the ceremony."

Mr. Grannell went home at noon and communicated his plan to Anna, who was wild with delight.

"You are doing a bad thing for me, Uncle. I shall be more homesick than ever now. But you are so good to me I

will try to be brave. I love you both so dearly it will give me pleasure to know that you are together and happy. . . . Aunt Gwin, how nice that sounds!''

''Yes; it does,'' smiled Mr. Grannell. ''But it's somewhat in doubt yet.''

''Oh! is it?''

''I fear it is.''

It happened that Mrs. Kahree did not return to lunch that day, and Mr. Grannell was obliged to wait until dinner, to speak to her.

It did not suit him to go to his office in the afternoon, his mind was too much perturbed for business. So he ordered the carriage, and had Uncle Tom to drive him and Anna over the route they had taken with Mrs. Kahree that sweet day on which he returned from Havana.

At dinner, Mr. Grannell was silent and preoccupied. His mood had been thus so much of late that Mrs. Kahree thought little of it.

Anna was bubbling with glee, which surprised Gwin, for she had been quite inconsolable that morning, because the time was so near when she must leave home again.

''Mrs. Kahree,'' said Mr. Grannell as they were passing through the hall after dinner. ''I would like to speak to you a few minutes.''

She bowed and followed him to the library.

At the door he paused for her to pass in. Then he entered and closed the door. Turning, he faced her.

One look into his love-lit eyes, and all doubt of his abiding affection for her fled. Another man's wife though she might be, that expression set her heart to beating wildly. She knew what was coming.

She had more than once been made conscious of his

superior strength of mind, and while her fine womanly nature rendered obeisance to his masterful spirit, as fine womanly nature usually does to a masterful spirit in man, a retrospective glance filled her with dread of the task before her and something very like a doubt of her own strength to resist him assailed her. For, besides this forceful spirit of his, she had to cope with her own mad heart.

"Mrs. Kahree, we have been friends some time. Will you permit me to drop a formality, and call you by your first name?"

She bowed assent.

"Gwin, my darling, I can not permit you to leave me again."

She put out a hand protestingly, and took a step backward.

With a long stride forward he stood so close to her that his breath brushed her cheek as he resumed passionately.

"You must marry me at once, this evening!"

"Mr. Grannell, I can not listen to this."

"Call me Edgar," he pleaded.

"Mr. Grannell, what does this mean? I thought we settled this months ago."

"But you are divorced now, and Judge Kahree is married again. Are you not aware of that?"

"I knew the judge had secured a divorce, and I understood he contemplated marriage, but —"

Gwin opened a purse which was suspended from her belt; drawing a folded sheet of paper from it, she handed it to Mr. Grannell, who unfolded it and read:—

> " 'Whatever you may hear about me, remember that I hold my marriage vow to you inviolate.
>
> A. J. Kahree'."

Mr. Grannell looked amazed.

"Where did you get this?"

"I received it through the mail the day you arrived home from Europe."

"Well, Judge Kahree is married. I met him and his wife in London."

"There is a mystery somewhere. I consider myself still bound to him," she persisted, "and, according to this statement he considers himself bound to me. Why he should send me such a message, married or not, I can not understand."

"Did you mention to him that? . . . ."

"Yes, I told him all."

"Ah, it is clear to me now. He wrote this to prevent . . . ."

"Your breaking your marriage vow. But hasn't he broken his?"

"No; doesn't he assure me to the contrary?"

"Gwinnie that proposition is absurd. He worships you and he can't endure the thought of your belonging to another while he lives."

Forthwith Mr. Grannell resorted to the fine argument he had prepared for this contingency, and his impassioned plea — a plea more vitally interesting to him than any he ever before had made — came through a wealth of words whose lure awoke in Gwin an impulse to cry out, "Take me; I am yours!" Instead she listened, calm outwardly, while he set forth the several particulars which, in his opinion, freed her from her marriage vow. In conclusion, he broke out with new earnestness:

"I entreat you in behalf of two lonely lives — the divergence of whose paths both nature and circumstances protest

against! I beseech you not to permit prejudice to sunder two loving hearts!''

Mrs. Kahree quickly lifted her head.

''What do you mean by 'two loving hearts'?''

Mr. Grannell turned away to hide a smile as he remembered that she was not aware that he possessed her secret.

''Just what I said; no more — no less.''

''On what evidence do you base so presumptious a statement.''

He smiled back at her complacently, with an expression in his face of gratified freedom from doubt that filled her with consternation.

''Will you kindly answer my question, sir?''

''Yes; I have your word for it, which is quite sufficient.''

''My word for it? — When did I, by the slightest hint, ever tell you that I loved you?''

Mr. Grannell's smile developed into a broad grin. Then he laughed provokingly, and Gwin lost her temper.

''Answer my question!'' she demanded disdainfully. ''Will you?''

''I certainly will: I stood outside the door in the hall a few weeks ago, and played eaves-dropper, while you made love to my picture.''

Gwin's eyes dilated, her lips fell apart, the hot blood surged over her face and neck, and she sank to a chair.

''I did not mean to hear it, darling; but if you knew how happy it made me — how it lightened life's burdens from that hour to this, you would not regret it, I know.''

She raised her flushed face a moment.

''If you knew how you are torturing me, you would hush, and not refer to the subject again.''

''Is it torture to know you have made me inexpressibly

happy? This is the one drop of sweet in my cup. Would you deprive me of it?''

Again Gwin lifted her face.

''I would, — and I will! I have no right to put a drop of that sort of sweet in your cup. If I have done so, I will remove it. For I will conquer my foolish heart, and I will do it inside of three months. I have an indomitable will, especially when I know I am in the wrong and determine to right myself. In three months time I shall be able to tell you that not a vestige of the foolish passion remains.''

She felt strong at the moment. The severe stoical sophism with which she had been instructing herself lent a glamour of simplicity to the problem before her. Besides, she felt humiliated — angry. It seemed to her now that nothing would give her so much pleasure as to be able to execute her threat.

''I don't believe you can do it,'' he declared. ''I couldn't.''

She rose to her feet. Again their eyes met, and something held them together for several seconds. Gradually the determined expression faded from her face, and her quivering eyelids fell.

Then his magical voice spoke with assurance.

''My peerless darling, transparent as pure crystal! Your love will never fail me. I no more fear it than I fear that yonder blazing lamp will cease to warm the earth;'' he smiled, as he pointed toward the west.

''Wait and you shall see. Do you think you know me better than I know myself?''

''Wait, and you shall see.''

He repeated her words with a confident smile.

Her eyes flashed indignantly.

"If you continue this bantering. I shall succeed sooner than I had hoped."

She took hold of the door knob.

He stood with his back to the door, leaning against it, looking into her face with a provoking expression.

"Will you kindly let me pass?" she said.

"No; begging your pardon, I am not ready. I have something more to say. I called this meeting; when I get through with the business before the house I will signify it by a motion to adjourn. . . . "Gwin, my darling —"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "Mr. Grannell, you outrage every —"

"My darling, my very own," he continued, breaking in upon her vehement protest with passionate recklessness. "I have traveled around this globe; have visited all the principal places of interest in the world; have crossed the blue Mediterranean; am familiar with the isles of Greece, 'Where burning Sappho loved and sang;' have stood entranced before the finest paintings and statuary from the hands of old masters; but my memory holds a gem superior to any of these, and though I were a starving pauper, the wealth of the world could not buy it: It is the picture of a fair woman with a tender voice, standing under a white light before a man's portrait. Shall I tell you what she said? It is indelibly imprinted upon my mind. I can repeat it, word for word."

Gwin put out a hand imploringly, and her eyes sought the floor.

Mr. Grannell was at this moment standing under the shadow of the strongest temptation of his life. He whose ancestral lineage had been the boast of generations; whose fair name never had been sullied; whose dealing with his

fellow men had won for him their highest regard. Even he who regarded marriage as sacred, because of the eternal principles involved therein. Who was conscious that the corner stone of civilization and our national life rests upon the authority and executive power which are born in the family, and that he who ignores these principles, does violence to his race and to his own soul, and thus falls under the ban of the inexorable law of compensation which demands payment to the uttermost farthing. Yet this man, of fine judgment, strong character and refined nature, was now standing on the verge of a moral precipice, and but for this woman, with her clear conception of right, would topple, go over, and drag her with him.

Not that he was less conscientious than she, nor that his mind was less able readily to discriminate between substantial ideas and brain-wrought fantasies. But while he contemned and repudiated the gross divorce laws of the age, which conventionalism lustfully sanctions; his scruples did not mark lines quite as sharply as did hers, and it must be admitted that he was not seeking conviction. But his honest mind was open to it, and, even now, it was struggling with strong forces, for conviction was gradually searching him out.

Since reading Judge Kahrèe's statement to Gwin, — that he held his marriage vow to her inviolate, Edgar Grannell was arriving at new conclusions. This statement, together with the evidence of what he saw while in London of the *status quo* between Rose and the judge, convinced Mr. Grannell that their marriage was one of mere form, and that they did not consider themselves man and wife, except in a legal sense. Probably some technicality made a form of marriage necessary, to protect the girl's estate and the judge

had lent himself to it for that purpose. At any rate, Mr. Grannell had the utmost confidence in Judge Kahree, and did not doubt his word. So, as he had neither died nor committed adultery, Gwin was not free, according to pure ethics, and Mr. Grannell's plans were all upset. For, while the laws of the land would sanction his marriage with her, he felt that ethical law would not.

A deep sadness born of these thoughts crept into his hungry heart, and in the rare, unifying silence which followed, it fructified. He realized that he must surrender her, or sacrifice his principle. The impression was strong upon him that the time had arrived when every attempt to prevail with her must cease.

Gwin had thrown herself into a chair beside him. The cold breath of sorrow was again sweeping the cords of her heart. How she pitied him! She knew him so well now — knew what life would be to him without her — knew how dreary his home would seem to him, and how he would again plunge into the gregarious whirl of business and politics, to find surcease, as he did when he lost Roxey. She did not think how it would be with her. She had had so much trouble she was becoming inured to it, but, poor Edgar, how desolate he would be! It seemed to her that all sweetness had died out of life again, and left only that "stern daughter of the voice of God — Duty."

Into the brooding silence her voice fell serene!

" 'And two shall walk some narrow way of life
So nearly side by side, that should one turn
Ever so little space to left or right
They needs must stand acknowledged face to face;
And yet, with wistful eyes that never meet,

With groping hands that never clasp, and lips
Calling in vain to ears that never hear,
They seek each other all their weary days
And die unsatisfied — and this is fate.'

"We have met; our hands have clasped; we have stood acknowledged face to face; but fate has decreed that we shall walk in separate paths. We must submit, even though we die unsatisfied. For, Mr. Grannell, I cannot consent to marry you while Judge Kahree lives and continues to assure me that he is true to his marriage vow.

"You know now that I love you, although I did not intend you to know it; for I thought it would increase your pain at giving me up, and a thought of pain to you is punitive to me."

She arose and extended her firm, slim hand. He clasped it a moment, then he opened his fingers and looked down upon it, lying upon his palm so fragile and fair. She saw the color slowly recede from his face. Suddenly he dropped her hand, caught her in his arms, kissed her lips twice, and her brow. Then he gently pushed her from him.

"Good-bye, it is over," and he opened the door for her to pass out. He closed the door after her and locked it.

"O false world! — O bankrupt heart! — O life! — thou galling load!"

The words fell from lips white with agony. Mr. Grannell remained in the library alone for hours. But he came forth a stronger man spiritually. He had been in the crucible, his lips had just tasted a drop from the cup of crucifixion; but his soul was peaceful. Such victories never fail to bring the peace that passeth understanding.

CHAPTER XVII

NOTWITHSTANDING Edgar Grannell's nonchalant manner and incredulous smile at Gwin's declaration that in three months she would conquer herself, and that not a vestige of the foolish passion would remain, it had been a menace to his mind ever since. He had abandoned the idea of marriage — while Judge Kahree lived — which, doubtless, would mean that it was abandoned forever; but he did not feel called upon to surrender Gwin's affection. That affection was a gift from nature. Who had a better right to it than he, since he was willing it should measure up to Plato's standard of purity.

He knew that Gwin was a dreamer — an idealist. Too well balanced to be a fanatic. But the very one to become an uncompromising iconoclast, and begin in her own heart. He realized how potent a factor her tenacious adherence to her ideals would be in helping her to extirpate this affection.

Those three months were up now, and Mr. Grannell was longing for a glimpse of Gwin. She was only a block away, but he had not seen her since the evening he bade her goodbye in his library. He had been busy almost night and day with his practice and the campaign. This had kept time from lagging, and enabled him to preserve his usual cheerful spirit. But somehow, now that the time had come when he might end suspense, he hesitated. The pulsation of his heart was sluggish, and he lacked incentive to action.

It was a warm clear evening, the sun was down, and Venus was sparkling in a sapphire sea. But Edgar Grannell took little cognizance of the heavens. He was standing on the

lawn at home, his eyes fixed to the earth. He felt a strange affinity with the withered leaves at his feet. His hat was pulled low over his forehead, and his hands sunk in his pockets.

Presently he lifted his hat, passed to the gate, out and down the walk toward a large brick house which was brilliant with lights that gleamed from many windows.

When he arrived there, he saw Gwin standing upon a balcony in the second story.

John answered his ring.

Mr. Grannell quickly passed up the stairs, and was soon in her presence. Their hands met. Did she flush and pale, or was it the play of the street light over her features?

"Mrs. Kahree," began Mr. Grannell at once, "the three months are up when you were to look me in the eyes and declare that 'Not a vestige of that foolish passion remains.' Are you ready to-night to make that assertion?"

There was no longer doubt as to the rush of color to Gwin's face. It was ablaze, for she had failed, and she thought that he suspected it and was exulting. But could she have known the truth and have had a glimpse of what was before her, how differently would she have replied! and what a world of remorse and grief it would have saved her. But in a moment of weakness she permitted pride and a flash of the old temper to come between herself and the man she loved.

"If I continue to feel as I do now, and you continue to taunt me, I shall soon succeed."

"Is it possible! that you have so misunderstood me as to think me capable of this? I did not deem it necessary to explain that suspense had driven me here — that I had relinquished the idea of marriage; but that I felt lonely and hungry to see you."

"I beg pardon, Mr. Grannell, if I have done you injustice. I am not responsible for the fact that duty is a cold, relentless task-master."

Mr. Grannell replied in a pained voice.

"Why will you persist in lacerating your own heart and mine? But if this is the way you feel about it, good night."

Gwin stood tense as he turned from her. She listened to his footsteps as he passed through the hall with its granitoid floor, and down the stairs. She heard the street door close behind him; watched him as he passed up the white walk, without a glance backward; watched the beloved form recede; until he entered his own grounds, and disappeared behind his own shrubbery.

The impulse came to follow him and acknowledge. But, instead, she went to her own suite of rooms, entered, closed and locked the door. She felt stupefied. Mr. Grannell's coming had surprised her. Besides, there was a vague, reproving voice in her bosom which grew more and more urgent. The old quick temper and impulsive tongue, which in her early life had caused her so much pain, had again asserted themselves at a time when she needed tender sympathy and a cool head.

At first she thought she would write to Mr. Grannell and apologize. But, after long deliberation, she decided to let the matter rest.

"If he thinks me cold and unfeeling, he will forget sooner. But oh, it breaks my heart to think it possible for him to forget! Yet, we both would be better off dead than encouraging this affection, under the circumstances, for it isn't at all likely we ever shall be more closely related to each other than we now are."

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. GRANNELL and Mrs. Kahree had not spoken together for several months. They had had glimpses of each other on the street and at church. Once an usher seated her in Mr. Grannell's pew, by his side. That sermon was almost a blank to them both.

That night Mr. Grannell retired late.

When the night was far spent, and the moon was sinking behind western hills, a woman's wide open gray eyes were gazing full in its face.

One dark, stormy night in November the Grannell carriage stopped at Mrs. Danks' boarding house. A servant had a note for Mrs. Kahree.

As John presented the silver tray, upon which lay the dainty white message, the soft lavender perfume, which seemed always to linger in the Grannell home, rose to meet her. The letter was from Anna. Gwin opened it and read:

> "'Dear Mrs. Kahree: Uncle Edgar is dying, and wishes to see you.
>
> Anna'."

Only a white set face, to indicate that there was any feeling, as Gwin hastily threw a long circular cloak about her, ran downstairs, out through the driving rain to the carriage, which she entered, and was soon standing in the hall at the Grannell home.

A solemn hush pervaded the house. The handsome dark-

eyed master was not there to greet her, as of old. All was still and desolate.

Mrs. Sims met her with a sad face. She silently removed the damp cloak from Mrs. Kahree's shoulders, and hung it upon the hall tree. Then, beckoning her, she led the way upstairs.

Arriving at the door of Mr. Grannell's room, Mrs. Sims softly opened it, ushered Mrs. Kahree in, then closed it, and retired.

As Gwin's eyes met the scene presented, she turned blind, staggered forward and sank to a chair.

"Oh, she's going to faint, doctor!" whispered Anna, who was kneeling beside the bed.

The doctor stood on the opposite side of the bed with his back to the door. He turned quickly, and started forward.

Mrs. Kahree put out a hand, to check his advance, and shook her head.

There upon the bed, in a coma, with death in his face, lay the man against whom she had battled with her heart for years. She sat rigid, while a sort of agonized fascination held her gaze. "Oh, that last interview!" she thought, "if that could be blotted from my memory I could endure every thing else. He came to me with his sore hurt, and I failed to understand. How could I feel angry toward him! How could I tell him that I would drain the last drop of sweet from his bitter cup!"

Gwin sprang to her feet and turned to the door. With groping hand, she found the knob, opened the door and staggered into the hall; then, softly closing the door behind her, she hastened to a window, and threw up the sash, for she felt suffocated. A gust of wind and a dash of rain, met

her, which revived her, and she let them beat into her face awhile. She scarcely knew what she was doing. She was haunted by a pair of sad eyes and a grieved voice which said, "Why will you persist in thus lacerating your own heart and mine? but if this is the way you feel about it, good night."

Every sense of Gwin's being seemed to have merged into a generator for anguish. She wondered how long reason could retain its throne, under such a strain.

When she began to feel chilled, she closed the window and returned to Mr. Grannell's room. Approaching the doctor, she whispered: "Is there no hope?"

"Very little. It is my opinion that he will cease to breath before morning."

Anna arose from her knees, and, coming to Mrs. Kahree's side, put her arms about her and wept softly. Mrs. Kahree embraced the sorrowing girl, and her pallid lips whispered:

"Dear child!"

Anna soon lifted her head, and turned to the doctor.

"Doctor, Uncle Edgar sent for Mrs. Kahree and wishes to speak to her alone."

The doctor bowed and followed Anna from the room.

Gwin stepped to the bedside and bent over the man she loved, while death seemed hovering between them.

"Edgar, O Edgar!"

She did not hesitate to call him Edgar now.

As her low wail of anguish fell upon his ear, he opened his eyes, and their hands met.

"Gwin, my darling!"

"Edgar, forgive me for my coldness. I never meant to hurt you. The feeling in my heart that evening was, and now is, that it will kill me to live without you."

"My own sweet darling," he murmured, kissing her hand. "I hold no hard thought against you. But I heard the doctor tell Anna that I could not live. I can not die satisfied and leave you shelterless. You must marry me now, that I may endow you with my earthly possessions, and I wish you to bear my name. There is no selfishness in the request this time. All I ask is, that I may die with my head pillowed upon your arm, and that you will kiss me and call me husband. You will not refuse me now, I know."

Her answer came in a wail:

"Edgar, have mercy and pity me! I dare not! I am still a wife according to Judge Kahree's own statement. How gladly I would come to you now and comfort you if I could! "

"Darling, think again," he insisted in a faint voice. "There will be no sin. For I am slipping away from Earth. A clergyman is below stairs, waiting to perform the ceremony."

"Edgar, I dare not; though I break your dear dying heart by refusing. . . . . Oh!" she gasped. "Oh!!" as with an exhausted sigh, Mr. Grannell lapsed into unconsciousness.

Gwin sank on her knees beside the bed. Slipping an arm under his head, she drew it close to her breaking heart. Tenderly she smoothed the dark silky locks from his broad white brow. Not a tear moistened her eyes as she fixed her burning gaze upon the features which she felt were soon to be hidden from her forever. Her face looked as if she, too, were dying.

Softly stroking his forehead, face and hair, she continued to gaze for several minutes, trying indelibly to imprint upon her mind every feature.

At last, she placed his head back upon the pillow, pressed one kiss to his lips, and hurried from the room and from the house. Forgetting her cloak, she walked home through the pelting rain with uncovered head.

All night she paced the floor of her room, never thinking of her wet clothing; she remembered only that Edgar was dying, and that she had refused to allow him one drop of sweet in his bitter cup; and, failing to stifle her love for him, she had tried to deceive him. She who had striven always to be so truthful, who had prided herself upon being above practicing deception, in any form, on any one, had, in a moment of weakness, tried to delude the man she loved, thus depriving him of the little happiness she might have bestowed upon him.

"And, oh, I though I was doing my duty!"

The next morning as she was still pacing the floor, some one passing through the hall, remarked:

"I understand that the Honorable Edgar Grannell died last night."

"Yes;" replied another voice, "so I heard."

Gwin sank to the floor in a swoon.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"I wonder why Mrs. Kahree doesn't come to breakfast?" queried Mrs. Danks, a little later.

"Lena, go up to her room and knock, she may be ill. All the boarders have eaten; it's late."

In a few minutes, Lena rushed into the dining-room and cried breathlessly:

"Lawd, Miss Sally! Miss Kahree layin' on de flo' dead! I done crack at de doah, den I open it, an' look in, an' she sho is dead. O lawdy! I's skee'd to def! I is sho kilt!

I nevah seen no dead pusson, when I's all alone by mys'ef fo' in my life. O lawd! my lawd!''

Before Lena was through with this outcry, Mrs. Danks and several of her boarders were upon the stairs, hurrying to Mrs. Kahree's room. They found her cold and almost pulseless. Fortunately, one of the gentlemen present was a physician, and the work of resuscitation was begun without delay. But Gwin remembered nothing for several days.

When she recovered consciousness, Harry Spencer was standing beside her bed.

''Sister, do you know me?''

''Yes; it's Harry; how glad I am to see you, dear Brother!'' she said, putting out a hand. ''But what's the matter with me?''

''You have been very ill for two weeks,'' replied Harry, clasping her thin hand between both of his. ''I came a week ago, in answer to a telegram. When I saw you then, I never expected to hear you speak another lucid word.''

''Oh, yes! it all comes to me now. Oh, that load! Why could I not have died? Must I take it up again? Oh, I am so tired!''

With a despairing expression of countenance, she turned her face away.

''Sister, perhaps I can lift that load.''

''No, Harry, you can't; you don't know what it is. I must carry it or be crushed by it; it yet remains to be seen which.''

''Yes; I know what it is; I know all about it. Do you think good news ever killed any one, Gwinnie?''

''I don't know,'' she answered apathetically.

''If you will not permit yourself to become excited, I will tell you something very pleasing,'' smiled Harry.

Gwin opened her gray eyes wonderingly a minute, then she closed them wearily. "Tell me anything you please, it will not excite me."

She lay thus for some time manifesting no curiosity or interest in what Harry had to communicate.

"I have something to say about your friend, Mr. Grannell."

Her eyes opened quickly. They were more blue than gray now.

"What would you say, if I should tell you that he is living and rapidly convalescing?"

"Harry! you don't mean it! you don't know what you are saying! Don't trifle with me, I implore!"

"Yes; I know what I am saying,and it is true; but you promised not to become excited."

The color was coming and going in Gwin's face, and she was panting.

"Here now, you must quiet yourself! this will never do!"

Her answer was a sob, and the pent up grief, which had been scorching her brain, gushed forth in tears of joy. Harry beckoned the nurse, and both left the room, so that Gwin might sob it out alone.

When they returned, a half-hour later, they found her sleeping.

The next morning when Harry visited Gwin, he found her greatly improved. She held out a hand to him.

"Dear Brother, how nice to see you again! We have been separated so long. . . . How handsome you are!"

"See here, if you continue that sort of talk, you will have my head so inflated that my hat will be too small."

He clasped Gwin's hand, and bowed to the nurse, who had taken up a tray and started to leave the room.

"How is Mr. Grannell?" inquired Gwin, as soon as they were alone.

"Improving. He's out of danger; but I've caught the malady."

"What? — The malady?"

Harry laughed.

"What malady?"

"Yours and his — I'm in love."

Gwin stirred and reddened.

"O Harry!" she was greatly embarassed.

Then she pointed to a chair, and Harry sat down.

"This must seem wondrous strange to you, Harry, that I am separated from my husband, and standing at the gates of death, because of my love for another. I scarcely can realize it myself. It seems so at antipodes with my pet theories."

"Well — yes;"admitted Harry. "Mere subservience to law, however."

"What? — what law?"

"The same that shoots the blossom from the bulb and twines the vine from left to right about the tree."

"Dear Harry, how you understand! You always had a faculty of placing me on the best of terms with myself — regardless of how ridiculously I may have behaved. . . . . How I have missed you out of my life!"

"How I have missed you out of my life! more than you will ever know, Gwin."

Gwin never had suspected that Harry's affection for her had been deeper than that of a brother for a sister. So she was spared the sorrow of knowing how he had suffered.

"I think I never had a greater surprise than when I read your letter informing me of the disruption between you

and Judge Kahree. What was the trouble? May I ask?''

''I am sorry, Brother, but I can not tell you. I can say this, though, I haven't departed one iota from my first principles.

''But, Harry, you say you are in love. With whom?''

''Anna Grannell; and, glory be to Billiken! I have won her!''

Gwin's eyes grew bright with moisture.

''Dear Anna, she is one of the sweetest girls I ever knew. My illness has been a blessing, after all, for it brought you two together. You are fortunate, Harry, you have won a treasure, and I am so glad! oh, so glad!''

''That's the way I have it figured, that I have won a treasure; and glad doesn't express it. I have had a lonely time of it at the old home. But I think there are brighter days ahead of me now.''

''Yes, Harry, I am sure of it. I don't see how it could be otherwise. You have been such a good son — such a dear good brother, you deserve happiness.''

CHAPTER XIX

TWENTY months had elapsed since the hand of Judge A. J. Kahree had been united with that of Rose Ruthvon in an assumption which all the world, but they, recognized as marriage. This environment did not exert a coalescing influence, however; it opened a gulf which widened to a tacit preclusion of social intercourse between them. Rose was very sensitive and reserved, and while both took pains to appear natural to others, so as not to attract attention, they were almost like strangers to each other now. The judge was very attentive and deferential to Rose when with her; but he avoided her as much as possible. He attended her to and from meals and frequently invited her to go out with him. She went occasionally to a lecture, an opera, or for a drive. He had become quite regular in his attendance at church; but Rose drew the line squarely there. She held the propagandism of the church responsible for all her misery. Only for its influence, Judge Kahree would love her.

What a period of starved loneliness the last twenty months had been to her! Tied, as she was, to one she worshiped; who reciprocated not; and — as she thought — did not know she loved him, nor care; who could not conscientiously call her wife; whose sympathy she dare not seek; whose hand she dare not touch. She attracted men wherever she went. What cared she for that! the world held but one man for her; his love was denied her. But he was kindness itself. He was striving to keep his part of the contract. He provided luxuries with lavish hand, which helped to

humiliate her. For she knew she was not necessary to him in any way. "A mere interloper," she told herself, "an intruder on his bounty."

But this is not saying that Judge Kahree was not at all susceptible to the charms of this dominant woman who was his in the eyes of the law and with whom he walked and talked daily. Occasionally, her sweet breath touched his mouth when they were conversing, and his heart quickened, while the fragrance from her hair and bodice, "which accentuated her exquisiteness," seemed to follow him. So he was conscious in his heart of hearts that the only safety for him was in keeping to his self-prescribed line. Realizing Rose's love for him, he knew how her heart ached. His sympathy went out to her. But he considered himself blameless. The condition was a thrust of fate which had come too suddenly for him to parry. It had placed him under "relentless vassalage." He began faintly to sense a possibility that the tyrant, Temptation, might yet hold him in "an inglorious bondage, and scourge him with burning lashes."

. . . . . .

"If he would but give me his sympathy, or ever seem to feel the need of me!" moaned Rose, as she stood before a long mirror in her boudoir. "Did ever a beautiful woman receive as little love as I do! Yet, it is my own fault — or rather, it is owing to my strange fascination for Arrel Kahree. I have thrown away all other love for this — and he knows it not, nor cares.

"O my dear father, how I miss you! Little did you suspect the suffering you were leading me into when you forced me into this. But it was done out of the love of your tender heart, and I do not blame you; oh, no! oh, no!"

Rose sat down and wept softly for some time.

"Yet, how can I blame Judge Kahree?" she resumed tearfully.

"I can not — I must not! But I can break away from this degrading dependence, and I will! Surely, I can find something to do to make a genteel and honest living. To-morrow I will go and see what I can find."

But to-morrow came and went, and Rose did not go. The thought of turning from the man she loved and facing an untried world held her back from day to day. Besides, she did not know where to seek employment, nor what kind to look for, and her father would disapprove of it, if he could know. That thought hurt her cruelly.

One evening as Judge Kahree sat amid a fragrant blue cloud in his sitting-room, a lighted cigar between his teeth, and his feet upon the back of a chair in front of him, there came a soft knock at his door; then it was pushed open, and Rose stood upon the threshold. The judge looked up in some surprise. This was something she seldom did.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said, as he took the cigar between his fingers, and removed his feet from their elevated perch. "I merely came to say that I have intruded upon your generosity long enough, and I am going out to earn my own living. I thank you for your kindness to me. If I ever can, I will repay it in dollars and cents, whatever can be paid in that way, but I shall always owe you a debt of gratitude."

The judge rose to his feet; placed his cigar in an ivory rack upon the table; came to her side; and took her by the arm.

"Too much smoke here," he said, as he led her back to her boudoir, and closed the door between the rooms. Then he drew an easy chair, and placed her in it. "Now, tell me what I have done to hurt your feelings."

"Don't think that!" she pleaded, with burning cheeks. "It is to escape your generosity that I am going."

"But you are not going. Have you considered that it would create a scandal? Remember we are man and wife — in the eyes of the world. You are my legal wife; if you should disappear, and I should die, there would be no one to claim my estate. Besides, you owe it to your father to remain with me, you know we both promised. I can not permit you to go, if there is any way to prevent it, and I think there is, for I believe you will listen to reason. If you feel that I deserve the least consideration, you would not willingly bring reproach upon me."

Rose lifted her eyes to his furtively.

"I would rather die than to bring opprobrium upon you. I did not consider what the world would think or say. Believe me, I appreciate the noble sacrifice you made to satisfy my dying father's wish. I never shall cease to be grateful to you."

Judge Kahree stood looking down upon her pityingly. Her pathetic situation struck him with new force as being complete and distinctive — without hope of alleviation. He never before had realized fully to what extent she had been wronged by this unnatural alliance, or how galling the chains must be. He answered softly — tenderly:

"You speak of my sacrificing for you. I wish you could realize, Rose, how much pleasure it affords me to be able to protect and keep near me the daughter of my friend, of him who twice saved my life. I have told you before, I tell you again it is a privilege. What could I spend my money for that would give me the satisfaction this does? — Not a thing. My earthly possessions are all yours, except one hundred thousand dollars. In my will, I have left that amount to Gwin.

But I doubt if she will accept it. She has refused my every tender of money, so far. If you do not wish to give me pain, you will henceforth refrain from allusion to the subject.''

The judge sat down, and for more than an hour he and Rose conversed upon various topics. She was bright and well informed. Judge Kahree had always enjoyed conversing with her, and had regretted all along that he was obliged to hold himself so aloof from her.

A few evenings later Judge Kahree was walking about restlessly in his own handsome apartments, contemplating his own strange case, and the more pathetic one of the girl in the adjoining suite.

Presently he swung round and found himself facing his own image, which was reflected in a mirror. He smiled sadly as he observed the silver threads about his temples.

'' 'Touch us gently, Time,' '' he murmured.
'' 'Let us glide adown thy stream
Gently, as we sometimes glide through a quiet dream.' ''

Judge Kahree's mood was pensive and introspective. He was surprised now, when he thought it over, that he could have been induced to consider, for one moment, the unique proposition he had entered into with Rose. ''Still,'' he reflected, ''I don't know what else I could have done, conscientiously, to satisfy Ruthvon. I took the obligation in good faith. But I haven't kept it to the letter. I have neglected the girl, and she feels it. Has my zeal in duty been a mere pandering to consciousness of my own weakness? It seems so, really. Poor Rose, she lives the life of a recluse behind four walls. While she has been a pet of society, and could be again, its fawning sickens her and her ardent nature cries out for the warm, impassioned affection of one heart,

and that heart is mine. This is unfortunate for us both. But I promised to take her father's place as her companion, to associate with her as closely as he did, and I promised her a brother's love. Have I kept my word? — No! Why? — '' He turned to the mirror again, and looked himself squarely in the eyes. ''You weakling! you coward! . . .'' Then he knocked at the door of Rose's apartments.

Rose answered immediately, and stood holding the door, waiting for him to ask for a magazine or a paper, — or to tell her he was going out of town.

''May I come in?''

''Oh! — why certainly!''

A glad light flashed into the girl's eyes, and she threw the door wide.

So this big-hearted man proceeded to take another step in the mistake he had made. If he had continued as he had begun, or if Rose had had Gwin's educated conscience, all might have been well, even in his present unnatural environment.

Rose was a chaste as Gwin was, and as conscientious, so far as she knew. But she was a little heathen, in ethical culture. She considered herself the lawful, wedded wife of Arrel Kahree, for whose affection she was starving. What if he did stipulate that their love must be purely Platonic! She did not object. The purer the better. But he didn't love her at all, that was clear to her. He had held himself so aloof from her since their marriage. Rose could not understand why. ''I believe that poor Papa's forcing me upon him as he did, has made him dislike me,'' she reflected, with burning cheeks. ''I thought he would kiss me sometimes, as my father did, and tell me I was necessary to his happiness. I would be satisfied if he would do that. He said he needed a sister. A

strange sister it is who never kisses her brother, and rarely talks with him, except in the presence of others.''

Although Rose was holding an open book in her hand when she opened the door to Judge Kahree, these were the thoughts his knock had interrupted.

''Rose,'' he said, as he entered the room, ''I have come to you for a favor.''

The girl's eyes grew round with wonder.

''I have a headache to-night. Will you read to me awhile?''

Rose's heart quickened with keen pleasure at being able to grant him a favor.

''Yes; I shall be glad to. I enjoy reading aloud. Have you a preference?''

''Not in particular. What is that in your hand?''

'' 'Lucile.' It is a favorite with me; perhaps you would prefer something else — a late work or — ''

''Read from that,'' he interrupted, throwing himself upon a couch, and adjusting a pair of big silk pillows under his head. ''Its style is musical and restful; it will suit my present mood.''

Rose sat down beside a table under the great electric chandelier, which filled the large, beautiful room with brilliance, and, opening the book at the first chapter, her voice, vibrant with sympathy for Lucile, was soon playing with the rhythm of the exquisite poem, adding a charm to its melliflous meter.

The judge lay with half-closed eyes and listened, while the beautiful reader vivified the metrical story. He was surprised when the clock struck the hour of twelve.

''Really, Rose, I beg pardon,'' he said, springing up, and consulting his watch, to see if the clock was right. ''I had

no idea it was so late. I read that poem when it first came out. But I enjoyed it so much to-night that I forgot everything else, even my headache. Thank you very much. I will come to-morrow evening and hear the conclusion — that is, if I may?''

''If I may?'' There was reproach in her voice as she repeated his words.

''Good-night,'' he said, smiling back at her as he left the room and closed the door behind him.

Rose was too happy to sleep; she switched off the light, and, going to a window, threw aside the curtains and sat down in the starlight.

''Dare I hope? — O trembling heart, cease your thrills of ecstasy and listen to reason, lest disappointment follow and kill you!''

For hours she sat dreaming of what might yet be in store for her — trying to imagine what it would be to dare to touch his hand, or kiss his brow.

The judge retired at once and was soon sleeping.

The next evening, after dinner, the judge remarked playfully, as they left the elevator.

''By the way, I have an engagement this evening with a lady. Have I not?''

''I am not supposed to be informed as to your engagements,'' she returned, in the same sportive spirit. ''You may have more than one, for aught I know.''

The judge followed Rose into her suite, and closed the door.

The calmness of her nature seemed to pervade all her belongings. An air of restfulness lingered in her apartments with the breath of flowers, which she always kept about her. She seated herself beside the table and took up the book.

The judge took an easy chair near her, placed his feet upon a stool, and settled himself back comfortably.

In the meantime, they had fallen into a reminiscent colloquy. Rose dropped the book in her lap, crossed her white hands over its purple cover, and lo! it was nine o'clock before either realized it, and she had not commenced to read. It was eleven o'clock when she finished and closed the volume. As she placed it upon the table, the judge remarked.

"The English and Scotch writers are holding the attention of the literary world to-day in a pre-eminent degree."

"Yes; I think there is decline of ability among American writers of fiction," opined Rose.

"Oh, no! no! no!" the judge objected. "There may be some lack of enthusiasm, but not of ability."

It isn't to be wondered at if there is lack of enthusiasm. If young American writers were not irrepressible, few would survive the strangling their enthusiasm receives from American publishers."

Judge Kahree smiled back at Rose quizzically.

"You speak warmly. Is it from experience? May I ask?"

"I know by what I read," she evaded.

The judge had observed that Rose sometimes received cumbersome documents from New York through the mail.

"I half suspect you of hungering for fame, Rose."

"Hungering for fame! I have never had a thought of fame. But I have been studying and writing for some time, hoping to be able to earn my living with my pen. I have met only failure, so far. It seems that I must continue to hang like a dead weight, upon you. Pardon my reference to this. — But you would have it," she appended, with a sad smile.

Rose did not know what a strong appeal this was to Judge Kahree's sympathy, nor how tenderly his eyes were regarding her. His afflictions and didactic errantries had expanded his generous nature, and this largeness was now to become a flexion for temptation. For his sympathy was leading his better judgment, and Rose had absolutely no realization of the real situation. It was one thing to her, and quite an other thing to Judge Kahree.

"I am beginning to see that I have been derelict in my duty toward you." The judge told Rose reflectively, after a minute. "I will try to be more companionable in future, — try to do more to make you happy."

She quickly thrust out a hand with its pink palm turned toward him.

"Don't! for heaven's sake! don't talk about doing more for me, while I do nothing! You don't know what happiness you have conferred upon me by asking a favor of me."

The clock struck half-past eleven. The judge arose, said good-night, and left the room.

Again, Rose was too happy to sleep. She sprang to her feet, switched off the light, threw aside the curtains from a window, and sat down in the starlight to dream. Could it be possible that a new day — that ideal day — was dawning for her? That its rosy light, even now, was penciling her sky?

On the opposite side of the partition all was silent. Judge Kahree had retired, but he did not fall asleep at once. The fragrance from the room beyond seemed to pervade his atmosphere.

After this, Rose and the judge were together a great deal. Several months passed. It was clear to Rose now that the

judge was, indeed, fond of her — that she was necessary to his happiness.

Had he ceased to love Gwin? No; but she was dead to him, and Rose supplied the love and sympathy which his yearning, homesick heart required; and "poor Rose" had no one but him to care for her.

But Judge Kahree still was strong in his purpose to be true to his convictions. He felt that he was doing only his duty in giving Rose all his spare time. It was a pleasing duty, and he did not realize how dear she had become to him.

Rose's situation was unique. A crisis was approaching. She watched it almost with bated breath — never dreaming what it would mean to him she loved. A woman in years, a child in experience — all untutored along the lines on which Gwin was so enthusiastic and conscientious. Never having been taught, how could Rose be expected to see the matter in its true light and comprehend the great principle which was actuating Judge Kahree? To her, the crisis was merely being folded in his arms, and with warm kisses, assured that she possessed his undivided affection. It was feeling free to fondle and pet him as she had fondled and petted her father. The judge was her legal husband. She knew now that he loved her, although he had not committed himself verbally by the slightest hint. But Rose, more than once, had read his secret in his face — as he long ago had read hers. Still, she felt that she could not be sure of him, until he expressed himself in words.

Her feeling was intense. The door of hope was standing ajar. What if the monster Prejudice should yet close it in her face! She felt that mere prejudice was holding back his confession. What wonder, then, that she strove with all

the witchery of her alluring powers to draw and hold Judge Kahree?

One evening the judge was out of town on a business trip. Rose sat upon a broad window sill in her boudoir, in the full moonlight, watching for his return.

His train was due. Rose had been sitting there a long time, her mind retroactive with sweet memories.

Ten o'clock struck, then eleven. Rose began to feel anxious. What could be keeping the judge?

She leaned out at the window, and looked up and down the street. She could not sleep now until he came, so it was useless for her to retire.

She could see the Thames rolling sullenly along; a medley of honks from its busy crafts jarred upon her ear, and a silhouette of the Tower of London lay dark against the sky. Rose turned her face from it. The picture was too cadaverous for the hour. She could not endure the thoughts it suggested. They sent cold thrills up her back.

Now and then a carriage drove up and stopped before the hotel, but the judge was not among those who came.

It was midnight when his brougham arrived. As he left it, he glanced up at Rose's window and saw her.

"My darling!" she breathed passionately, "Can he retire without coming in to see me a minute, after having been away two days? He knows I haven't retired, he saw me."

Rose's question was soon answered by a gentle rap at the door of her boudoir. She sprang to her feet and hastened to admit the judge.

"Good evening, Rose. I saw you at the window, so I called a minute, to see how you are, and to reprove you for keeping late hours. Don't do this again. I missed my train."

He put his arm about her. Then let it fall, as if he had received a sudden reprimand.

"Are you well?"

"Yes; thank you, her heart was fluttering fast. "You are well, are you?"

"Perfectly, thank you."

"I will turn on a light," she said, taking a step toward a switch. "I have been sitting in the moonlight."

"Not for me, I prefer the moonlight."

He took her by the arm, and led her back to the window, through which the moon was casting a great white spotlight. Seating her upon the broad sill, he sat down beside her.

A low, muttering sound came rolling through the quiet air.

"That's thunder!" Rose sprang to her feet, and crossed the room to a west window. Lifting the silken curtain, she looked out.

"There's a frightful cloud rising. I am glad you came before the storm did. I have an inherent fear of storms, bequeathed me from my mother. They terrify me."

She returned to the moonlit window and sat down beside the judge.

A book lay upon the sill between them. The judge took it up.

" 'The life of Cardinal Richelieu,' " he read by the moon's rays.

"I just finished reading it," she replied.

"An obdurate, invincible character," declared the judge.

"And one which held a paradox," she smiled, — "that of fine mental caliber, led by religious superstition."

"Self aggrandizement was the moving motor with Richelieu," the judge explained.

"He claimed it was conscience; with his last breath he called God to witness the fact. Yet, you remember he once said: 'When I have made up my mind, I go straight to the point. I mow down everything that stands in my way, and cover it all up with my red cassock.' Conscience, conscience! that coat of many colors," and she thought: "Oh, that superstition could be eliminated from Judge Kahree's mind! For — be it pagan or Christian — it is the same stony Gorgon yesterday, to-day and forever. Its mission is graft. It ruined the Rameses dynasty; induced kings and philosophers to exchange their gold for the obscure oracles of ignorant, muttering priestesses at Dodona and Delphi; invented the tortures of the Inquisition; incited leaders like Richelieu to murder; hung innocent victims at Salem, in our own beloved homeland; and for months has held the man I love — my own wedded husband — aloof from me."

Rose's eyes flashed a little, but they were beautifully starry, and were never more calling.

The emotions that were sweeping the breast of the man beside her were twofold now.

"Good-night," the judge said, rising; "it is late, I am keeping you up."

"Oh, no; indeed you are not! I can't sleep till the storm is over. Don't leave me alone with it — please!"

Judge Kahree turned back to the window.

Again, like the growl of a demon, came the voice of distant thunder.

After a little reflection, Rose begged the judge to go.

"You are tired, it is selfish for me to keep you. Please go now, I will try not to be nervous."

A peal of thunder shook the earth. He saw Rose shiver and creep toward him a little. He would not leave her now

till the storm was over, although he really wished to do so. For he began to feel a little afraid of himself, — not quite so self-confident as of old.

The clouds had not reached the moon yet, and it shone full upon them. But the sullen voice of the approaching storm grew louder each moment.

Another electric flash and terrific report terrorized Rose and she instinctively nestled closer to the judge.

It seemed cruel that he could not put his arms about her, as her father always did at such times; and now he realized, for the first time, that she had crept into his affections deeply.

Presently the girl became conscious of how closely she was nestled to Judge Kahree. She straightened up, and pushed from him a little — quite ashamed of herself.

"It seems strange that I should fear death. I! — I! — Isn't it ridiculous that I care to exist; or have you ever considered the matter?"

"I presume I have thought more about it than you have suspected; and, Rose, this sham marriage of ours has been a mistake; I realize it more and more."

"Do you? . . . . You feel that it has been a mistake? I have disappointed you. I have not been the sweet companion, the dear, sympathetic sister you so much needed."

"Not that, Rose."

"What then?"

There was a sob in her voice, but the judge did not reply. Her lips twitched slightly, as her pellucid eyes were turned steadily upward to his face.

"You will not tell me what you mean?"

"You are the sweetest, most innocent, untutored child of your age I ever knew," he laughed.

Rose failed to see the appropriateness of a laugh. What was there to provoke it? she wondered.

But the judge had never felt more deeply sorry for any human being than he did for her as he stood there gazing down into her beautiful upturned face.

The moon was shining through light, scurrying clouds now, and the trees were tossing and swaying in the wind. Presently there came a blinding flash, and a terrific peal of thunder. In a paroxysm of fright, Rose caught the judge's hand between both of hers. It required but the soft touch of those fingers to turn the scales. His arms closed about her:

"Rose, my darling — my beautiful queen!"

Ah! her dream was realized at last. Sweet as honey fell those words upon her ear, and his kiss thrilled her like an elixir of the immortals.

A flash and a crash followed. Judge Kahree remembered no more for a time. When he regained consciousness, a nurse was sitting beside his bed. He glanced about him: "Where am I? What has happened?"

"You are in a hospital, Judge, and you have but a short time to live."

"But my wife?"

"She has passed into the beyond."

"Quick! Bring writing materials!"

The nurse left the room and soon returned with pen, ink and paper.

"Now sit down and write what I shall dictate."

The nurse seated herself, dipped the pen in the ink and waited a few seconds:

"Honorable Edgar Grannell, St. Louis, Missouri, U. S. A.", began the judge. A pause followed. . . . . "My dear friend: I am dying. Gwin is yours at last. 'As a man

soweth so shall he also reap'. . . . .'' Another pause, in which the nurse waited with uplifted pen. After a minute she glanced toward the bed. The judge was dead.

A few hours later the nurse wrote and mailed a letter of explanation to Edgar Grannell, in which she inclosed Judge Kahree's last message.

But by this time a surprising change had come into Edgar Grannell's life.

CHAPTER XX

SOCIETY felt quite chagrined that the Honorable Edgar Grannell was so exclusive. He was not the type of man in which one would expect to find this trait. He was genial,— a host within himself. Wherever he went he was hailed with delight. It seemed strange that he remained a bachelor. It was whispered that he had loved and lost, — that his heart was buried in some girl's grave. But that was years ago, — it ought to have been resurrected by this time. So had thought more than one fair woman who forthwith proceeded adroitly to lend her aid. But Mr. Grannell had a polite way of dissuading such intrepid designers which left them no alternative but to courtesy with backward step as gracefully as possible.

The wealthy Mrs. Craven, a friend of his, had a niece, a charming young widow, of whom she often spoke, who lived in Cincinnati.

One day Mr. Grannell met Mrs. Craven on the street.

"Now, Mr. Grannell," she said, as she gave him her hand, "Ruby Williams is coming to visit me and I am going to ask, as a favor, that you help me make it pleasant for her while she is here."

"Certainly, Mrs. Craven, I shall take pleasure in doing all I can."

"You will find her very sweet. If you are not careful, she may prove too much for that impervious heart of yours. I have fore-armed you now. If you are vanquished, I shall have nothing to answer for," laughed the lady.

"My heart impervious? You have a wrong impression.

I am fond of women, and very susceptible to their blandishments.''

''Ye—s; you have a queer way of demonstrating the fact. You live as secluded as a monk. I doubt if you have exchanged a dozen words with a marriageable woman in six months — except, perhaps, in a business way.''

''You evidently are not informed as to all I do.''

''Well, good-bye. Ruby will arrive to-morrow. I shall expect you to keep your promise.''

It was a week before Mr. Grannell again thought of his promise.

''Really, I had forgotten that.'' he soliloquized. ''I must go at once, or Mrs. Craven will never forgive me.''

He went to his dressing room immediately. When he came down stairs, he paused in the hall, to consult his watch.

''I must call at Mrs. Danks, look in at Gwin, and tell her where I am going,'' he reflected, as he took his hat and left the house.

Gwin had permitted him to visit her occasionally since his illness. He found her at the piano now, in her studio. She looked bright and cheery and all about her was cozy and inviting. He glanced back longingly as he bade her goodnight.

Mr. Grannell was not expecting to meet such a vision of loveliness as that which burst upon his sight when he was ushered into the Craven drawing-room. Ruby Williams was ravishingly beautiful — rather an uncommon type. She was above medium in size, with luminous black eyes, an abundance of fine dark-red hair, a complexion which was a marvel, suggesting snow and roses, a musical laugh,, and polished manners.

Although her mentality was mediocre, she was gifted with

a mind which reflected brilliantly, when inspired by other minds. To hear her tell a story was highly amusing. The smallest incident was charming when related by her.

Ruby's parents were in moderate circumstances, and she was the oldest of seven children. At nineteen, she determined to do no more skimping. So she married a wealthy man, thirty years her senior, hoping that he would not live long. Nor did he, but he failed in business before he died, leaving her little but his name — which she did not admire, it was too common. Eighteen months after she left her father's home a bride she returned to it a penniless widow. She had been a widow long enough to lay aside her weeds when her aunt conceived the notion of inviting her to visit St. Louis, with a view to capturing Edgar Grannell.

Mrs. Craven watched him closely as she presented him to Ruby. She observed his look of surprised admiration, and her silent prediction was: "She will bring you to time, sir."

"Mr. Grannell," piped Ruby sweetly, as they seated themselves. "I have been waiting with great impatience to meet you. Aunty tells me that you are a recluse of the hard-shell variety. I never before saw a real live hermit. But I am disappointed. I expected you to wear long hair, and bushy whiskers of about five years growth."

"I am sorry to have disappointed you," laughed Mr. Grannell.

"Oh, well, you may prove sufficiently interesting without the hair and whiskers. One naturally associates a delightful little romance with a hermit, — a broken heart, and all that, you know."

"I am to understand, then, that you look upon broken hearts as delightful and amusing?"

Ruby responded with a laugh musical as tinkling bells, and she thought: "I wonder if he is heart-whole?"

As if answering a telepathic message Mr. Grannell added: "But, Mrs. Williams, I assure you that although my heart may have been pierced, scorched and riven, it is all in one piece today."

"Ah," thought Ruby, "he admits that he has suffered, but it is over — the wound no longer bleeds. A most interesting subject, — easy to manage. He, doubtless, imagines his heart calloused. The truth is, it is more susceptible than if it had not been wounded." She smiled softly, as she remembered the fate of her other subjects and in imagination saw this desirable one floundering in a net woven by no novice.

Ruby Williams was a close observer, with acute instincts. She soon decided that, to succeed with this man, the best that was in her would be called into requisition. This decision had a salutary effect, resulting in a close introspection of her own faults, and a sincere wish to be truer and better.

Mr. Grannell liked Ruby. Her manner was pleasing, and free from any hint of self consciousness, while the gems of wit that fell from her lips so often would render a homely woman attractive, and, notwithstanding her brilliant humor, which afforded him so much amusement, he felt a touch of sympathy for her, because she was widowed so young. He had not forgotten how he suffered when he lost Roxey.

He spent a very pleasant evening with Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Craven. As he was about to bid them good night Mr. Craven appeared at the drawing-room door.

"Good evening, Mr. Grannell, I am glad I got home before you left. I have a favor to ask of you."

"I shall be most happy to accommodate you, if I can, Mr. Craven. What is it?"

"I bought tickets for the opera to-morrow evening. But I can't go. I had a business appointment which had slipped my mind. I wish, if you can conveniently, you would take my tickets and accompany these ladies."

"Certainly; it will afford me pleasure to do so."

"Thank you. That's a big load off my mind. One woman is a great care, two a double burden. I don't see how those fellows in Utah manage them in droves. I'd rather undertake to manage a herd of mustangs."

Laughing, Mr. Grannell bowed himself out, and Ruby's musical laugh rippled out with him.

"How do you like him, Ruby?" inquired Mrs. Craven, after her husband had retired, and she and Ruby were alone.

"He's a prince! I'm in love with him already. But, O Aunty I'm afraid retribution is about to overtake me."

Ruby laughed hysterically.

"Why? What do you mean, child?" interrogated Mrs. Craven anxiously, as Ruby's laugh ended in a gush of tears.

"I began to flirt when I was a mere child, and I have been heartless as Satan."

"I am sorry to hear it, dear, but you are penitent. I see that."

"No ordinary woman can win his affection," sighed Ruby.

"I agree with you, but you are not an ordinary woman. I know him well, — I watched him closely, and I read him. You have made a most favorable impression. Men are all alike, beauty's bait never fails. Young and old, married and single, priest and layman, all get drunk at sight of it. Its power is invincible as absinthe. Three-fourths of the men will let go of God in their dying hour, to clasp beauty and go to perdition with it."

Ruby brushed the tears away and brightened.

"I have trifled until I am nauseated. This is the first man I ever cared for. I am going to be good now. A man like Mr. Grannell is an inspiration. Hasn't he an irresistible voice? There is a marvelous quality in it."

The next evening, on his way to attend the ladies to the opera, Mr. Grannell called on Mrs. Kahree, to explain why he was obliged to cancel the engagement he had made the previous evening to spend this evening with her. He knew she would excuse him, for they were now quite informal with each other; although she would not see him often, lest adverse criticism follow.

Gwin felt disappointed; but she excused him cheerfully, wished him an enjoyable time, — and meant it.

"I am willing to forego the pleasure of an evening, to have you go out socially, — it will do you good. I wish you would go oftener."

She glanced him over admiringly.

Mr. Grannell was standing with a gloved hand resting upon the back of a chair. He dare not take time to sit down. The curtain would go up at eight. He had but thirty minutes to make it. His carriage was at the door.

"Thank you."

The old, fond look was in his eyes, but almost with the next breath he remarked that Mrs. Williams was a most beautiful woman, — brilliant.

A throb of pain shot through Gwin's heart. Looking into his honest face and clear eyes she thought:

"It would be excruciating. But if he should seek one who can give him closer companionship than I can bestow, I could not object; though I believe it would kill me. It never before occurred to me that such a thing was possible."

An evil spirit seemed to whisper: "This is your reward for not having married him when you thought him dying. Even the Lord would have forgiven you." Then the taunt of Judge Kahree's attorney recurred to her mind, "I do not envy you all the pleasure you will get out of life if you continue to adhere to your present principles."

"Don't let a thought of me mar your pleasure," she smiled, as he again expressed regret at leaving her. "I have some new music. You know how time goes with me when I am at the piano."

. . . . . .

As the distinguished Edgar Grannell with Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Craven entered a box at the opera, many a glass was leveled at them and there were numerous inquiries as to who the superb young woman beside him was.

"I thought," said one lady, "that Mr. Grannell's heart had — long since — turned to adamant. I wonder if this fair one has undertaken to soften so impenetrable a substance?"

The next evening, there was a dinner party to which Mr. Grannell, the Cravens and other distinguished guests were invited. The fourth evening there was a lecture, and Mr. Craven again requested Mr. Grannell to take his place and attend the ladies. The fifth evening, Mrs. Craven gave a coterie, and so it went.

Two months passed; Mr. Grannell and Gwin had met only a time or two, for a few minutes. He always had a plausible excuse, and seemed to regret that business and social duties kept him so entirely occupied.

Gwin had little time to think. She was busy with her class through the day, and at night she was so tired that she slept soundly, in spite of a feeling of unrest. She strove

to keep anxious thoughts out of her mind, and she chided herself when they came trooping up.

One morning when Mrs. Kahree was giving one of her pupils a lesson, the girl suddenly turned.

"Mrs. Kahree, did you ever see Mrs. Ruby Williams, who is visiting Mrs. Craven?"

"No."

"Oh, you ought to see her! She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw. The men are all wild about her. But she has already caught the one she wants. They say she's engaged to Edgar Grannell. You know him. Mamma says he hasn't gone in society nor paid any attention to a lady for years. But he has been perfectly devoted to Mrs. Williams, ever since she came here. It is whispered that the nuptials are to be the most elaborate ever celebrated in St. Louis. We are sure of an invitation, for Mamma and Mrs. Craven are intimate friends."

For a moment Gwin's head reeled, and she was white as marble. But the girl turned to the piano without observing it.

With difficulty Gwin collected her scattered thoughts, and benumbed senses, sufficiently to finish the lesson.

She was like one in a dream the remainder of the day. But she accomplished her accustomed amount of work with as much carefulness as possible. It was a relief when it was finished, and she could be alone.

"Who would have thought it!" she whispered, as she sank to a chair unnerved, when the last pupil had gone. Her face was white and pinched. "I must now endure the shame of knowing that I love and always shall love another woman's husband."

The following afternoon was Sunday. Gwin received a call from Mr. Grannell. She was expecting and dreading it.

Gwin knew that his dinner was ready, and she was conscious that he was aware of it; but he seemed loath to go. She thought she knew why, and her heart was throbbing with a dull ache.

He can scarcely muster sufficient courage, she reasoned, and he dreads to go, until he has made a clean breast of it.

He rose, took a few turns through the room, then stopped before a mirror and stood gazing into it abstractedly, when he caught a glimpse of something in Gwin's face (who sat behind him, her gaze fixed upon him) which caused him to wheel suddenly. But he found her looking into the street.

"Good-night," he said, and was gone.

Gwin drew a deep sigh. She was sorry he had not unburdened his heart to her. "It would have been a relief to us both," she murmured.

. . . . . .

Ruby Williams sank into a fit of the dumps, after what she saw at the window of Mrs. Danks' boarding house.

"Do you know who that was, Aunty?"

"I don't know the lady," replied Mrs. Craven.

The next morning, as soon as Mr. Craven had gone to his office and Ruby was alone with her aunt, she began again:

"Really, Aunty, what is your opinion of what we saw at that window?"

"Opinion? It isn't worth a second thought. What is there so distressing in seeing a gentleman sitting at a window with a lady?"

"It was his position and facial expression. Did you observe that his hand rested upon hers, and that he snatched it away when he saw us?"

"What of it? I assure you he is too honorable to trifle

with your affections. That lady may be a relative of his — or an old friend.''

''Is there any way by which we may learn who she is?'' persisted Ruby.

''Yes; that was Mrs. Danks' boarding house. The girl who does my plain sewing, sews, also for Mrs. Danks. I will inquire of her.''

While they were talking, the girl in question passed in at a side door and up the back stairs. Mrs. Craven rose and followed her.

In the course of a half-hour she sought Ruby who was in her own room, looking very disconsolate. Mrs. Craven went at once to the subject.

''She's a music teacher and a widow. Mrs. Danks told the girl that she was once very wealthy, and held a high position in society.''

''Well, that doesn't explain what I want to know. What is she to him? and what was he doing there?''

''Why, Ruby, I couldn't ask the girl such questions as that — she couldn't have answered, if I had.''

''Of course not, but — well — I'm going to know — that is all. I will ask him!''

''Be careful, child; whatever you do, don't let him have a glimpse of your jealous disposition, or your temper.''

''I can not and will not endure suspense. He is to drive me to Forest Park this afternoon and I will improve the opportunity to put a few questions to him.''

''Be careful, child,'' admonished Mrs. Craven again, shaking a finger at Ruby, as she left the room.

Ruby waited with feverish impatience for the afternoon, and drew a sigh of relief when a carriage stopped before the

Gwin knew that his dinner was ready, and she was conscious that he was aware of it; but he seemed loath to go. She thought she knew why, and her heart was throbbing with a dull ache.

He can scarcely muster sufficient courage, she reasoned, and he dreads to go, until he has made a clean breast of it.

He rose, took a few turns through the room, then stopped before a mirror and stood gazing into it abstractedly, when he caught a glimpse of something in Gwin's face (who sat behind him, her gaze fixed upon him) which caused him to wheel suddenly. But he found her looking into the street.

"Good-night," he said, and was gone.

Gwin drew a deep sigh. She was sorry he had not unburdened his heart to her. "It would have been a relief to us both," she murmured.

. . . . . .

Ruby Williams sank into a fit of the dumps, after what she saw at the window of Mrs. Danks' boarding house.

"Do you know who that was, Aunty?"

"I don't know the lady," replied Mrs. Craven.

The next morning, as soon as Mr. Craven had gone to his office and Ruby was alone with her aunt, she began again:

"Really, Aunty, what is your opinion of what we saw at that window?"

"Opinion? It isn't worth a second thought. What is there so distressing in seeing a gentleman sitting at a window with a lady?"

"It was his position and facial expression. Did you observe that his hand rested upon hers, and that he snatched it away when he saw us?"

"What of it? I assure you he is too honorable to trifle

with your affections. That lady may be a relative of his — or an old friend.''

''Is there any way by which we may learn who she is?'' persisted Ruby.

''Yes; that was Mrs. Danks' boarding house. The girl who does my plain sewing, sews, also for Mrs. Danks. I will inquire of her.''

While they were talking, the girl in question passed in at a side door and up the back stairs. Mrs. Craven rose and followed her.

In the course of a half-hour she sought Ruby who was in her own room, looking very disconsolate. Mrs. Craven went at once to the subject.

''She's a music teacher and a widow. Mrs. Danks told the girl that she was once very wealthy, and held a high position in society.''

''Well, that doesn't explain what I want to know. What is she to him? and what was he doing there?''

''Why, Ruby, I couldn't ask the girl such questions as that — she couldn't have answered, if I had.''

''Of course not, but — well — I'm going to know — that is all. I will ask him!''

''Be careful, child; whatever you do, don't let him have a glimpse of your jealous disposition, or your temper.''

''I can not and will not endure suspense. He is to drive me to Forest Park this afternoon and I will improve the opportunity to put a few questions to him.''

''Be careful, child,'' admonished Mrs. Craven again, shaking a finger at Ruby, as she left the room.

Ruby waited with feverish impatience for the afternoon, and drew a sigh of relief when a carriage stopped before the

house, and, a minute or two later, Mr. Grannell was announced.

As they passed Mrs. Danks' boarding house on their way to the park, Ruby glanced up at the window where she had seen Mr. Grannell the previous evening.

"By the way, that was an interesting tableau I saw at that window yesterday. It would have made a fine art study."

She turned her inquisitive eyes full upon him.

Mr. Grannell shrugged.

"That lady is the widow of a valued friend of mine. We have been friends for years, she and I. She holds a high place in my esteem."

"Has she been a widow long?"

"Yes; several years."

With a breath of relief Ruby became her own sweet self, full of playful satire and ingenious wit.

They had an enjoyable drive. Mr. Grannell felt well paid for the time he spent with Ruby. She had a rejuvenating effect upon him. On this particular afternoon she reached a pinnacle in sparkling repartee and eloquence. She quite surprised herself and she charmed Mr. Grannell.

CHAPTER XXI

THERE had been great commotion in Mr. Grannell's home for several weeks. Dressmakers and deliverymen with boxes and bundles — some bearing the stamp "Paris" — were coming and going many times every day. Anna's suite had had a copious shower of elegant gowns, hats, gloves, shoes, laces, and jewels. But at last her beautiful trousseau was finished. A maid was packing the last trunk now, while another was dressing the bride elect for the nuptials.

Mr. Grannell at this moment was receiving and welcoming his guests, to witness the marriage of Anna Grannell and Harry Spencer.

Only intimate friends had been invited.

Among the latest arrivals were the Cravens and Mrs. Ruby Williams.

As Edgar Grannell, bowing low over the hand of the queenly Ruby, welcomed her to his home for the first time, many admiring eyes were turned upon the twain, and a murmur went round:

"There will be another wedding soon, and she will be the bride."

The whisper reached the ears of Mrs. Craven, who smiled approvingly.

A band of music had been stationed in the grounds near the house.

When the sweet strains of Annie Laurie were wafted softly in through open windows, a hush fell among the guests. Almost immediately Mr. Grannell appeared under the arch-

way at the lower end of the drawing room, bearing on his arm the fair bride. Passing slowly up to an altar of flowers banked in rich profusion, so rich that orchids smiled among them, and where a clergyman was waiting, they were met by the fond bridegroom and his attendant; and Harry Spencer received the coveted treasure from the hand of her uncle, and the twain were made one.

As the ceremony began, a lady entered the drawing-room through the archway and remained standing near it, half hidden by a tall vase filled with ferns and trailing smilax. While simply attired—when she moved forward to offer her congratulations, after the ceremony was concluded,— many pairs of eyes and several inquiries followed her.

Doctor Stanley crossed the room to where Mr. Grannell stood.

"Who is the lady in gray with the pink sash, Edgar?"

Mr. Grannell turned and glanced in the direction the doctor was looking; but failed to see a lady in gray with a pink sash.

"There by the jardiniere. The lady with her face turned half away, who wears pink roses."

"That is my friend, Mrs. Kahree; come, I will introduce you."

"She's married, then?"

"A widow," explained Mr. Grannell.

"Did you ever see that picture of Queen Louise, of Prussia, by Richter?" inquired the doctor, as he and Mr. Grannell were making their way to where Mrs. Kahree was standing.

"Yes."

"Isn't she like it?"

There was no reply; Edgar Grannell's mind had reverted

to Cologne, to those sad days when he was a wanderer from native land, when, despite his pride; despite the fact that the slender woman near the door was a "grass-widow," and he held them in contempt; despite the fact that she called herself another man's wife; he had wandered to that art-gallery, day after day, and gazed broken-heartedly upon that portrait.

"Now, doctor," said Mr. Grannell, after he had presented Doctor Stanley to Mrs. Kahree, "if you will excuse Mrs. Kahree a few minutes, I will return her to you. I wish to introduce her to some others."

Doctor Stanley bowed, and Mr. Grannell led Mrs. Kahree toward Mrs. Ruby Williams and the Cravens.

Gwin immediately felt the weight of the scrutiny of Ruby's black orbs, which had been watching her furtively since Mr. Grannell crossed the room to her with the doctor. The impression was conveyed to her mind that Ruby's attitude toward her was inimical, and that Ruby suspected that she loved Edgar Grannell.

The thought that she was about to be presented to Edgar Grannell's fiancée, under such circumstances, was sickeningly humiliating. But when she found herself standing before Ruby, with those black eyes looking inquiringly into hers, there came a re-action from an inherent force. The blood, which for a moment left her face, went leaping through her veins in burning refluence, touching lips and cheeks with color, and setting blue shades to playing in her eyes.

Mr. Grannell and Mrs. Kahree paused briefly, and exchanged a few remarks with Mrs. Williams and Mr. and Mrs. Craven, then passed on to other guests.

Although Mrs. Kahree's manner was unperturbed, she felt very much as she did that night in Kansas City, at the

reception in her home, when she overheard the story which had shrouded her life with gloom. Now, as then, she was making no effort to outshine, nor shine at all. She was struggling for strength to endure.

After presenting her to all his guests, Mr. Grannell returned her to Doctor Stanley.

Ruby Williams looked transcendently beautiful. She was at her best, sparklingly brilliant, and was soon the center of a dazzled group of men.

But there were many in that drawing-room who were made conscious of a high distinctiveness in Gwin, which her mellifluous voice, the sinuous grace of her movements and the lure of her sincere eyes accentuated.

At dinner, Ruby was seated next to Mr. Grannell, and Gwin across the board beside Doctor Stanley.

"I think," observed the doctor, in an undertone, with an inclination of the head toward Mr. Grannell, "that congratulations are in order. It is currently reported that, at last, he has met his fate."

"Indeed!"

Gwin's answer was faint; the doctor did not catch it. He glanced at her face. "Jupiter," he thought, "I believe I have made a discovery. I am sorry I said that. But I am surprised at Grannell. I thought he had better taste. That black eyed woman is a dazzling beauty, but I pity the man that gets her."

"Aunty," whispered Ruby, when, at last, she had an opportunity to speak to Mrs. Craven. "Mrs. Kahree is magnetic; and she's in love with Mr. Grannell."

"What of it? I have known a dozen women as magnetic as she, who at one time and another were in love with him. You see how much good it has done them. So long as you

are his choice, you needn't care who loves him. If ever a man was infatuated, he is infatuated with you.''

''Yes, I believe he is; but I am afraid of her influence.''

''Nonsense! there is no danger as long as he can see you. Men haven't crow sense when there is a handsome woman in sight.''

This had the sound of a doubtful compliment, but Mrs. Craven was innocent of malicious intent, and Ruby grinned with amusement.

Harry and Anna were to leave at one o'clock. So Gwin remained after the other guests had gone.

When the last good-bye had been spoken, and the carriage bearing the bridal party had sped away to the railroad station, Mr. Grannell closed the hall door and turned to Gwin.

''You are not in a hurry to go? I will take you home presently.''

He linked her arm through his, and led her back to the drawing-room. Then he wheeled an easy chair under the blaze of a chandelier, and seated her. For a few moments he stood before her looking down upon her with something like commiseration in his face.

''He's going to tell me that now; there's no escape,'' she thought.

''Procrastination is a bad thing,'' he began, at last. ''I have something I must say to you before I take you home.''

Her heart beat wildly. ''You needn't tell me — I know it already.''

''Are you sure?''

''Yes.''

She was trying to keep her bosom from heaving, and her breath from coming in gasps.

His lips parted with a smile.

"I think you are mistaken. No doubt you have heard some flying reports. Possibly you heard them before they reached me. My first hint came this evening in the form of congratulations upon my approaching marriage with Mrs. Ruby Williams.

"Poor little Spartan! I saw all evening, and I thought several days ago, that something had gone wrong with you, but I persuaded myself that I imagined it. Really, though, I flattered myself that I stood better than this in your estimation. Did you think, after all we have suffered, that I could be untrue to you?"

"Edgar, you are under no obligations to me. Had you thought of that?"

There were tears in Gwin's voice now. She was about to break down.

"No, I have thought of nothing of the kind. I consider myself bound to you."

"I have a living husband, Edgar, and you have told me repeatedly that you had given up all thoughts of marriage with me."

"Yes, so I have. But I never told you that I had given up all thoughts of affection. I love you as devotedly to-day as I ever did. You need my love as I need yours. I will remain true to you, until death separates us. I consider the relationship between us as sacred as if it had been celebrated by a ceremony, and before God and the holy angels, it is pure."

For a minute it seemed to Gwin as if her heart would burst with joy. Mr. Grannell still stood there with his gaze fixed upon her. She choked back her agitation, and managed to speak in a level voice.

"But, Edgar, since you have paid such marked attention

to Mrs. Williams as to create this mistake in the public mind, hasn't she misconstrued your attentions?''

''No; of course she understands, and I supposed you did. The mistake is owing to Mrs. Craven's insisting on my helping to entertain her, and keeping me so continually at it. Under ordinary circumstances, I probably would have refused; but I have known Mr. and Mrs. Craven all my life; they have been very kind to me and mine, I felt under some obligations; still, I had not counted on being monopolized to the extent that I was. Nor did I expect to be understood as courting Mrs. Williams; such a thought never entered my mind. I shall mention the subject to Mrs. Craven to-morrow. There is no serious harm done, I assure you — no injustice to Mrs. Williams.''

Two days later Ruby Williams — very disconsolate — left St. Louis. She stopped at St. Charles for a visit. While there she met the Reverend Doctor Noble, a self-centered, though popular pastor of a church in that city, who forthwith removed a band of crape from his hat which token of sorrow he was wearing for his second wife.

While defacing time had left a cruel stamp or two upon this illustrious gentleman, such as corpulence and a sparsely decorated crown, he wore a smooth, polished aspect. He was an orator, and a philosopher quite Periclesian in his notions. His plan for the church was artistic as that of the celebrated Greek statesman for Athens. He was careful not to say in plain words, Christ is no longer a drawing card; spirituality is a delusion: the Church has lost her grip; she can regain it only by being made a center of art and literature. But he tought it peripatetically, and flowery patterns of it were woven into his sermons, and, so skillful a linguistic juggler was he, that you were made to understand precisely what

Tallyrand meant when he said, "Language was intended to conceal thought."

But Ruby cared not what the doctor preached. It was a case of love at first with him, and of indifference from first to last with her. However, his grief over the loss of a wife was again assuaged.

After a courtship of six weeks, he and Ruby were married. After they had been married six weeks, the doctor felt more like wearing crape than ever before. But fate had decreed against his wearing it again. It was Ruby's turn next, which came a year later. She tolerated it long enough to get back to Cincinnati, when she threw it aside and came out in gay colors, declaring that she hated men worse then poison.

CHAPTER XXII

TO BE obliged to see one you love enduring a life of drudgery while you, rolling in luxury, are denied the privilege of lifting a hand to aid, even while conscious that the health of that dear one is being jeopardized, is a trial most severe. This was now Mr. Grannell's persecution.

While Mrs. Kahree had heretofore shown remarkable vitality and endurance, they were passing through an excessively hot, enervating summer and her strenuous duties were too much for her. The doctor declared that she must quit work and take a year's absolute rest, as she was threatened with nervous prostration. This she could not see her way clear to do, and Mr. Grannell felt quite frantic about it. She had laid by some money, but not enough for a year's vacation. Mr. Grannell tried to persuade her into accepting assistance from him. But she shook her head, smiled and tossed him a kiss from the tips of her fingers.

"How kind of you! You mean well!"

This was all the satisfaction he got.

In the midst of this dilemma the letter from London arrived, bringing sadness, as well as gladness, to both Gwin and Mr. Grannell.

While Gwin's heart still retained a sort of mother-pity for Judge Kahree, a revulsion of feeling, caused by his divorcing her and remarrying, the circumstances of which were unknown to her, had worked a change in her which had enabled her to eliminate him from her affection. But now something of the old tenderness welled up and choked her utterance.

Mr. Grannell took her in his arms. "I, too, loved Arrel," he whispered, "but we must drink the bitter with the sweet, and to me the sweet is very sweet! For to-morrow is our wedding day, and we will go home to dinner. Then come the bleak tempests, come poverty, sickness, blindness, we will stand by each other until death shall sever the tie."

"Amen!" she breathed, "Amen! Amen!"

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00021888217